



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

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Stay healthy this summer when visiting fairs and exhibits with swine

LANSING, Mich. – A fun summer tradition for families is visiting county and local fairs across Michigan. Health experts at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) want people to know about the potential for swine at these events to carry influenza viruses which can make people sick, and to take some simple precautions.

Swine influenza is a respiratory disease in pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that regularly circulate among swine. Swine influenza viruses do not usually infect humans, but human infections have been reported.

When influenza viruses spread from pigs to people it is called a variant influenza virus. In 2018, 17 people from six states, including three from Michigan, were sickened by variant influenza viruses after having direct or indirect contact with swine at fairs and exhibits. Since 2010, there have been 466 confirmed cases reported nationally. These infections and related hospitalizations have mostly been among children; however, all age groups have been affected.

Spread of the virus from a pig to a person is thought to happen in the same way that human flu viruses spread - mainly through droplets when infected pigs cough and sneeze. In a few cases, a person infected by a pig has then spread the virus to another person. People cannot get swine influenza from eating properly prepared pork or handling pork products.

“All swine, even those that appear healthy, have the potential to carry influenza virus,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, MDHHS chief medical executive and chief deputy director for health. “Washing your hands thoroughly before and after being around swine protects both you and your family from the risk of influenza virus, and also helps keep the swine healthy.”

Symptoms of swine influenza in people are similar to those of seasonal flu viruses and can include fever, sore throat and respiratory symptoms such as cough and runny nose and other symptoms such as body aches, vomiting or diarrhea. The incubation period is most commonly a few days but may be up to 10 days. Illness may last a week or longer.

Sometimes swine influenza causes severe disease even in healthy people, such as pneumonia which may require hospitalization, and in rare cases, death. Those at higher risk of developing complications include children younger than five years of age, people 65 years of age and older, pregnant women and people with certain chronic health disease, such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems and neurological conditions.

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Currently, there is no human vaccine for swine influenza and the seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against it; however, antiviral drugs, such as Oseltamivir and Zanamivir, are effective in treating it. Early treatment works best and may be especially important for people with a high-risk condition.

Persons who become ill with influenza-like illness after exposure to pigs should check with their doctor and ask about being tested for influenza. High-risk persons should contact their doctor as soon as possible. Also contact your local health department to report the illness.

Follow these simple steps to help stay safe around swine:

- Refrain from eating or drinking in livestock barns or show rings.
- Do not take toys, pacifiers, cups, baby bottles, strollers or similar items into pig areas.
- Anyone who is at high risk of serious flu complications and is planning to attend a fair should avoid pigs and swine barns.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid contact with pigs if you have flu-like symptoms.
- If you are sick, stay home from work or school until your illness is over.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it and wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

For more information on swine influenza, [visit the CDC website.](#)

For information about swine influenza in pigs, please contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development at 800-292-3939.

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