

Dear Staff and Students,

Information and Guidelines on Prevention of Human Swine Influenza

Introduction

Human cases of swine influenza virus infection have been identified in the Mexico and United States. The Department of Health of the HKSAR Government has already raised the alert level to severity level. In respect of this, the following information and guidelines serve to remind and assist colleagues and students to have a better understanding the impending threat.

Definition

Swine influenza is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza among pigs. There are four main influenza type A virus subtypes that have been isolated in pigs: H1N1, H1N2, H3N2, and H3N1. However, most of the recently isolated influenza viruses from pigs have been H1N1 viruses. The classical swine flu virus (an influenza type A H1N1 virus) was first isolated from a pig in 1930 and it is known to circulate among pig populations since then. The H1N1 swine flu viruses are antigenically different from human H1N1 viruses and swine flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with swine flu do occasionally occur. Most commonly, human cases of swine influenza happen in people with direct exposure to pigs (e.g. workers in the swine industry). Human-to-human transmission of swine flu can also occur.

Clinical features

The symptoms of swine flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Mode of transmission of Swine Flu

Influenza viruses can be directly transmitted from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Human infection with flu viruses from pigs are most likely to occur when people are in close proximity to infected pigs, such as in pig barns and livestock exhibits housing pigs at fairs. Human-to-human transmission of swine flu can also occur. This is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu occurs in people, which is mainly person-to-person transmission through coughing or sneezing of people infected with the influenza virus. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160F (71.1°C) kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

Prevention of Swine Flu

Since H1N1 swine flu viruses are antigenically very different from human H1N1 viruses, vaccines for human seasonal flu would not provide protection from H1N1 swine flu viruses. The following precautionary measures are recommended:

- ✓ Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way
- ✓ Keep hands clean and wash hands properly. Alcohol-based handrub is also effective when hands are not visibly soiled.
- ✓ Wash hands with liquid soap promptly if they are contaminated by respiratory tract secretions, e.g. after sneezing or coughing.
- ✓ Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- ✓ No spitting. Always wrap nasal and mouth discharges with tissue paper, and dispose of the tissue paper properly in a lidded rubbish bin.
- ✓ Consult medical advice if respiratory symptom exist or in case of fever.
- ✓ Refrain from work or school if develop symptoms of influenza.
- ✓ Develop good body resistance and have a healthy lifestyle. This can be achieved through a balance diet, regular exercise, adequate rest, reducing stress and no smoking.
- ✓ Observe good personal and environmental hygiene.
- ✓ Maintain good indoor ventilation.

- ✓ Avoid crowded places with poor ventilation if you are feeling unwell.

Existence of Symptoms of Influenza

If colleagues or students have symptoms of influenza, please consult medical advice and consider taking rest at home. If diagnosed of infection with human Swine Influenza, please inform the Estates Office as soon as possible for follow up action.

Hygiene Measures Adopted in the Campus Areas

The cleaning of the campus areas and the facilities will be stepped up. Instant hand disinfectant solution is available in many locations of the open area for use, and the solution will be periodically refilled where necessary.

Travelling on School Bus

If you have any respiratory symptoms, please wear mask while you are travelling on the school bus. Masks are available for free from the Security Control Centre or Information Centre.

Travelling Outside from Hong Kong

It is advised not to go to Mexico and the United States as far as possible during the alert period. If you were back from the mentioned locations recently and appears to have symptom of influenza, seek medical advice and keep the Institute informed.

Steps to be Taken in Hand-washing

1. Wet hands under running water.
2. Apply liquid soap and rub hands together to make a soapy lather.
3. Away from the running water, rub the front and back of hands. Massage all the finger tips properly including the thumb, the web of finger, around and under the nails. At last, don't forget to wash your wrist. Do this for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse hands thoroughly under running water.
5. Dry hands thoroughly with either a clean cotton towel, a paper towel, or a hand dryer.
6. The cleaned hands should not touch the water tap directly again. The tap may be turned off by using towel wrapping the faucet.

Steps to be Taken in Wearing Mask

1. You should wear a mask if you have a fever or respiratory symptoms, if you are going to a hospital or clinic, or if you are caring for a patient with fever or respiratory symptoms.
2. Wash hands before putting on a mask, and before and after taking one off.
3. The mask should fit snugly over the face:
4. The coloured side of the mask faces outwards, with the metallic strip uppermost.
5. The strings or elastic bands are positioned properly to keep the mask firmly in place.
6. The mask should fully cover the nose, mouth and chin.
7. The metallic strip moulds to the bridge of the nose and the mask should fit snugly over the face.
8. Try not to touch the mask once it is secured on your face as frequent handling may reduce its protection. If you must do so, wash your hands before and after touching the mask.
9. When taking off the mask, avoid touching the outside of the mask as this part may be covered with germs.
10. After taking off the mask, put the mask into a plastic or paper bag before putting it into a lidded rubbish bin.
11. A surgical mask should be changed at least daily. Replace the mask immediately if it is damaged or soiled.

The Estates Office has been closely monitoring the development of the issue. For further queries or report, please contact us at 2948 6269.