

The following information has been extracted from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## September 2009 Swine flu update:

This summer, the virus has been surprisingly tenacious in the U.S., refusing to fade away as flu viruses usually do. And health officials predict a surge of cases this fall, perhaps very soon as schools reopen. A White House report from an expert panel suggests that from 30 percent to half the population could catch swine flu during the course of this pandemic and that from 30,000 to 90,000 could die.

**1. No cause for panic.** So far, swine flu isn't much more threatening than regular seasonal flu. During the few months of this new flu's existence, hospitalizations and deaths from it seem to be lower than the average seen for seasonal flu, and the virus hasn't dramatically mutated. Still, more people are susceptible to swine flu and U.S. health officials are worried because it hung in so firmly here during the summer — a time of year the flu usually goes away.

**2. Virus tougher on some.** Swine flu is more of a threat to certain groups — children under 2, pregnant women, people with health problems like asthma, diabetes and heart disease. Teens and young adults are also more vulnerable to swine flu. Ordinary, seasonal flu hits older people the hardest, but not swine flu. Scientists think older people may have some immunity from exposure years earlier to viruses similar to swine flu.

**3. Wash your hands often and long.** Like seasonal flu, swine flu spreads through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick. Emphasize to children that they should wash with soap and water long enough to finish singing the alphabet song, "Now I know my ABC's..." Also use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

**4. Get your kids vaccinated.** These groups should be first in line for swine flu shots, especially if vaccine supplies are limited — people 6 months to 24 years old, pregnant women, health care workers. Also a priority: Parents and caregivers of infants, people with those high-risk medical conditions previously noted.

**5. Get your shots early.** Millions of swine flu shots should be available by October. If you are in one of the priority groups, try to get your shot as early as possible. Check with your doctor or local or state health department about where to do this. Many children should be able to get vaccinated at school. Permission forms will be sent home in advance.

**6. Immunity takes awhile.** Even those first in line for shots won't have immunity until around Thanksgiving. That's because it's likely to take two shots, given three weeks apart, to provide protection. And it takes a week or two after the last shot for the vaccine to take full effect. The regular seasonal flu shot should be widely available in September. People over 50 are urged to be among the first to get that shot.

**7. Vaccines are being tested.** Health officials presume the swine flu vaccine is safe and effective, but they're testing it to make sure. The federal government has begun studies in eight cities across the country to assess its effectiveness and figure out the best dose.

**8. Help! Swine flu outbreak!** If an outbreak of swine flu hits your area before you're vaccinated, be extra cautious. Stay away from public gathering places like malls, sports events

and churches. Try to keep your distance from people in general. Keep **washing those hands** and keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.

**9. What if you get sick?** If you have other health problems or are pregnant and develop flu-like symptoms, call your doctor right away. You may be prescribed **Tamiflu** or **Relenza**. If you develop breathing problems (rapid breathing for kids), pain in your chest, constant vomiting or a fever that keeps rising, go to an emergency room. Most people, though, should just stay home and rest. Cough into your elbow or shoulder. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever breaks. Fluids and pain relievers like Tylenol can help with achiness and fever.

**10. No swine flu from barbecue.** You can't catch swine flu from pork. Swine flu is not spread by handling meat, whether it's raw or cooked.

***Herron Island Manager's Note:*** *We have provided hand sanitizer to the ferry crew members to help protect them against transmission of the flu virus. We also have sanitizer on the office counter and invite you to use it when you come in to do business with us. We'll be watching reports on the swine flu and taking other steps as necessary to protect our members and employees from the virus.*