

Public Health Alert- Swine Flu

As you may be aware by now, the [CDC has confirmed 20 cases of swine flu in humans](#) in the U.S. There has been one fatality in Texas. There have been no cases identified yet in Massachusetts, however, like other states we are increasing our surveillance activities to see if cases develop in the Commonwealth. [The Boston Globe reported on the outbreak](#) and on local efforts here in Massachusetts. We are working very closely with the CDC and our partners at the state and local level.

Following up on the press conference Sunday, April 26 with Commissioner John Auerbach, and Dr. Al DeMaria, the Department of Public Health (DPH) issued an [updated press release](#) to the media which included new information that Massachusetts will receive materials and supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile. Every state was offered this additional assistance by CDC to increase available resources should they be needed to treat a large number of sick residents.

Swine flu is a respiratory infection caused by influenza type A (N1H1) virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can occur. Human cases typically involve people who have had direct contact with pigs, but person-to-person transmission is suspected among recent confirmed cases. Swine Flu is not transmitted by food and you cannot get swine flu by eating pork products.

It is still early in the public health investigation of this outbreak, and all partners are working hard to gather as much information as possible about the situation nationally and here in our state. Some of the cases in Mexico and Texas have been very serious, but the confirmed cases from California, Texas, Kansas, Ohio and New York City have been reported to be mild. We don't know yet why the cases in Mexico and the U.S. seem to be different in severity, but answering that question will be part of the larger public health investigation.

Even though there have been no cases identified in our state up to now, there are steps that everyone can take to help prevent getting or spreading any type of influenza:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you touch your eyes, nose, mouth, cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Practice good "cough etiquette" by coughing or sneezing into a tissue, or into your elbow instead of into your hands.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to avoid infecting them. Check with a health care provider when needed.

For more information on swine flu, visit the [CDC's new web site](#) at www.cdc.gov/swineflu. There is also some very good information on [how to care for someone at home who has the flu](#) on the DPH web site (www.mass.gov/dph). Massachusetts Emergency Management (MEMA) has also set up a website(www.mass211.org).

No computer? MEMA has set up a call in line -dial 211 on your phone. Additional printed information is available in the lobby of the Avon Town Offices, and the Council-On-Aging at 65 East Main Street, Avon, Mass.

We will update this section regularly with new information when it becomes available. As with every public health investigation, the situation will likely change many times, and we will do our best to keep the residents and businesses of our area updated as the situation evolves.