

Swine Flu: Information and How the Muslim Community Can Help*

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses (as opposed to bacteria) that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people. **Therefore one can become infected with the virus even if she/he has no contact with pigs or does not eat pork.**

Is swine flu virus contagious?

Yes. It has been determined that this **virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.**

How does swine flu spread?

Spread of this virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from:

- Person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza.
- Touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching your mouth or nose.
- An important and often overlooked mode of transmission (for Muslims) is during sujud – someone making sujud on a place after an infected person made sujud earlier and unknowingly contaminated the area for sujud.
- Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.
- We know that some viruses can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks – thus an infected person need not be in your presence to infect you.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

- Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.
- Try not to touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or other disinfectants to which you are not allergic.
- Use your personal rug or small mat (even if it is small enough for only your head to make sujud) for prayers in masjids or public places.

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus?

- Muslims (as everyone else) have a responsibility to protect others. The health and welfare of a community takes precedence over personal conveniences.
- If you are sick,
 - Limit your contact with other people as much as possible.
 - Do not go to work or school.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.
- Do not go to the masjid or any other public gathering place.

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

Symptoms include:

- Influenza-like illness symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat
- Other symptoms may include vomiting, diarrhea, muscle aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and shortness of breath.
- Severe disease can result in pneumonia and respiratory failure

What to do if you think you have swine flu

- Protect others by coughing or sneezing into a facial tissue.
- Avoid going to public places.
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Contact your physician who will then direct you what to do next, since she/he knows your medical history.
- If you decide to go to an emergency room, call before you go.

NOTE:

It may be necessary that Imam and other leaders of your masjid will be required to close the masjid and center – even for *jumma* and other congregational prayers, including *taraweeh*. This decision should be made in consultation with appropriate health and government agencies. The situation and required actions may differ from state to state and from local community to local community. Please cooperate.

For more information go to the CDC web site <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>

*Adapted in part from the Centers for Disease Control and prevention