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## Swine flu (Influenza A/H1N1)

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**Abstract :** Swine flu is a respiratory disease caused by a new strain of influenza virus. It spreads rapidly from human to human, which leads to a pandemic flu outbreak. Pandemic flu is different from ordinary flu because it's a new flu virus that appears in humans and spreads very quickly from person to person worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared an outbreak of human cases of influenza A/H1N1 a public health emergency of international concern. Before 2009 the Influenza A/H1N1 virus was not previously detected in swine or humans, containing a mix of swine, human and avian influenza virus genes. Three pandemics occurred due to influenza virus in the previous century, in 1918, 1957 and 1968. The 1918 pandemic was the most devastating, taking a toll of 30-40 million lives worldwide. The subsequent pandemics were relatively milder, each killing around 1 million people. In 2009 influenza outbreak, more than 414000 cases and about 5000 deaths had been reported to WHO by 195 countries worldwide. In humans the clinical symptoms are pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or bodyache, headache, joint pain, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. It may cause multi-organ failure and death. No effective treatment is available against swine flu. However, vaccines and antivirals can be used to reduce the spread of disease. There are two types of flu vaccines *viz.*, the trivalent and quadrivalent flu vaccines. The trivalent flu vaccines protect against influenza A virus H1N1, H3N2 and influenza B viruses. The quadrivalent flu vaccine protects against influenza A and B viruses. The vaccines are available as nasal flu spray and flu shots. Two antivirals namely, Tamiflu (Oseltamivir) and Relanza (Zanamivir) can be used to limit the spread of infection. The WHO, FAO, OIE and CAC has recommend good hygienic practice to prevent the spread influenza virus. Pork and pork products should be handled with good hygiene. The meat from sick pigs or pigs found dead should not be processed or used for human consumption.

**Key words :** Swine flu virus, Epidemiology, Current outbreaks, Transmission, Management

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