



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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### Public Health monitoring the swine flu outbreak

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health has been actively monitoring the outbreak of human cases of swine influenza virus. The department has been providing information to doctors and hospitals, and preparing to respond if the outbreak reaches Alabama. No cases are known to have occurred in Alabama at this time.

Swine influenza virus is a respiratory infection caused by influenza type A viruses that typically cause 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 cases in the US and Mexico. The cases in Mexico have had a high fatality rate, but the 20 recently confirmed cases from California, Kansas, New York and Texas have been mild and have recovered. Additionally, 22 students and teachers from New Zealand who recently traveled to Mexico may be infected.

"Even though the U.S. cases so far have been mild, the severity of the disease in Mexico is worrisome," said Dr. Donald E. Williamson, State Health Officer. "It is likely swine flu cases will occur in Alabama, since there are already cases in various states and they do not appear to be linked to each other. Persons should take steps to reduce their chances of contracting influenza."

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a sleeve or tissue.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose with 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. Patients experiencing severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek health care and treatment.

Swine influenza cannot be transmitted from eating pork or pork products. The symptoms of swine flu in people appear to be similar to the symptoms of regular human influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. As with seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

Public Health is encouraging health care providers to obtain the proper specimens from ill persons to test for swine flu. Specialized tests are needed to confirm swine flu, but tests at doctors' offices can sometimes determine a flu-like illness is not due to swine flu. Specialized tests can be obtained through the Alabama Department of Public Health laboratory.

For updated information about swine flu, please visit [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org).

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4/26/09