



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Tara Kennon, Communications Coordinator, tkennon@co.slo.ca.us,
805-781-4210 (office), 628-888-5223 (mobile)

Public Health Department Investigates Influenza Cases in Community

San Luis Obispo — The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department is investigating several cases of influenza (flu) in the community to determine whether they are linked to a case of influenza in a pig at the California Mid-State Fair.

At this time, several patients have tested positive for an influenza virus that may be different from viruses that commonly circulate among people during flu season. These people had extended contact with pigs at the Mid-State Fair. At this time, the Public Health Department does not have any laboratory confirmation that the cases are linked to pigs. In each of the laboratory-confirmed local cases of influenza being investigated, patients have recovered on their own within several days.

While the virus in these cases may be different from the viruses that commonly circulate among people during flu season, the symptoms and treatment are the same.

Influenza viruses commonly circulate in pigs. From time to time, one of these viruses can be transmitted from a pig to a human. In these cases, it is referred to as a variant influenza virus infection. This most commonly happens when people have extended close contact with pigs. A number of cases of pigs transmitting influenza to humans at agricultural fairs have occurred in other states in recent years.

When the virus is transmitted from a pig to a person, it generally does not spread widely to other people.

It cannot be transmitted by eating pork.

As a precaution, people who had extended contact with pigs at the Mid-State Fair should be alert for symptoms of the flu: fever, cough, sore throat, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue. Some people may experience vomiting and diarrhea with the flu. Symptoms usually start about one to four days after being exposed and last two to seven days.

If you experience flu symptoms—now or during flu season—it is generally most effective and most comfortable to recover on your own at home.

Some people are especially at risk for serious complications from the flu, including very young children (under age 5), older adults (over age 65), and people with certain underlying medical

conditions. These people should be especially alert and, if they experience symptoms of the flu, seek treatment from their regular doctor's office.

Flu of any sort can be dangerous and even healthy people can sometimes experience serious complications. If you experience difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, chest pain, severe abdominal pain, confusion, sudden dizziness, or severe vomiting that won't stop, seek medical attention immediately.

If you do not experience these symptoms and are not in these high-risk groups but are concerned about flu-like symptoms, call your regular healthcare provider. If you do not have a regular healthcare provider, call or visit your local urgent care center.

If you seek medical attention for the flu and have had extended contact with pigs, tell your health care provider about that contact.

The California Department of Public Health and California Department of Food and Agriculture have been informed of this investigation.

Keep reading for additional FAQs about protecting yourself and the community.

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How do people catch the flu from pigs?

Influenza can be transmitted from pigs in much the same way it is transmitted from people, such as through breathing in the virus after a pig has coughed or sneezed, or touching a surface it has contaminated. For example: a pig may cough or sneeze and a person may breathe infected droplets in the air, or a person may touch their face after touching a surface where a pig has sneezed. This generally occurs when a person has extended close contact with an infected pig.

It is not possible to catch influenza from eating pork.

Unlike the seasonal flu, this type of virus generally does not spread easily from one person to another.

Is flu transmitted from pigs more dangerous than the regular flu?

No, flu that is transmitted from a pig to a person does not appear to be more dangerous than the strains that regularly circulate during flu season.

It is important to remember that flu of any sort can be dangerous and even healthy people can sometimes become very ill. Anyone who catches the flu at any time of year should be alert and seek medical attention if they experience serious complications.

What can I do to protect myself?

The best way to protect yourself from the flu—now or during flu season—is to take three common-sense precautions:

- **Wash your hands often, and especially before eating or drinking.** Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.** This helps prevent the virus from entering your body.

- **Avoid contact with people who are sick.** This might mean you need to delay a meeting or a visit, or meet by phone or video instead.

In petting zoos or fair settings, it is especially important to frequently wash your hands and avoid eating or drinking in areas around pigs and other animals. Always avoid close face-to-face contact with animals, especially those who appear to be sick.

These are good habits to maintain throughout the year to protect yourself not only from flu but also from colds and other illnesses.

During flu season, it is also important to get the flu shot.

What should I do if I have the flu?

- **Stay home.** If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible. Rest, stay hydrated, and take temperature-reducing medicines (such as Tylenol or ibuprofen) as needed.
- **Keep it to yourself.** Don't share the flu. Wash your hands often and use a tissue to cover your cough or sneeze. Avoid spending time with other people, especially those who are at risk for serious complications of the flu.
- **Look out for signs that it may be more serious.** In most cases, you do not need medical care or prescription medicine to recover from the flu. However, some cases can be more serious. See the symptoms described above for signs that you may need to see a healthcare provider.

If I get sick, should I take Tamiflu or other antiviral medicine?

If you are sick with the flu, your doctor may prescribe an antiviral medicine such as Tamiflu to help reduce symptoms. This is the same for seasonal flu or variant flu. If your doctor prescribes antiviral medicine, be sure to take it as directed. If you are generally healthy (except for the flu), your doctor may not prescribe this medicine. Most of the time, people who are generally healthy do not need to take antiviral medicine for the flu.

Where can I learn more?

Visit www.cdc.gov/flu.

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