



Safety Reminder – Swine Flu

Recent news and government alerts about the swine influenza (swine flu) virus infection have caused concern throughout the United States. Over 40 human cases of swine flu have been identified. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is working with other agencies and health experts to monitor and control the spread of this virus.

Safe-Wise Consulting has prepared this brief document to provide general information about swine flu, how your organization should respond to this current issue and where to find additional information.

Background

Swine flu is a respiratory disease caused by viruses that usually effect pigs. Swine flu has been spread from person-to-person in the past, but was limited and not sustained beyond a few people. Cases of human infection were first reported in California and Texas over the past two months. Cases of swine flu infection in humans have also recently been reported internationally and other US States. The CDC has determined that the virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. Swine flu seems to be spread in a similar fashion as that of the seasonal flu. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through the coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. People may also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Preparation

Organizations should prepare a plan for providing information to staff, clients and the public; this information should be kept current. Organizations should ensure that all housekeeping practices and staff behaviors are consistent with CDC recommendations for preventing the spread of flu viruses and other communicable diseases. Agencies that provide support to vulnerable populations such as children, seniors and the sick should take extra care in preparation and prevention plans. An organization's emergency response plan should include site specific crisis management steps and outline the responsibilities for coordinating with community health efforts and possible pandemic response. The CDC has several [checklists](#) available to assist organizations in planning for a pandemic flu response.

Prevention

The swine flu and other viruses can be spread by person-to-person contact and contact with contaminated services. Many germs can live for up to 2 hours on surfaces such as desks, exercise equipment and door knobs. Virus droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person can move through the air.

There is currently no vaccine available to protect against swine flu; however there are simple behaviors that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like swine flu. The CDC recommends:

1. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; throw the tissue in the trash after you use it
2. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth; germs spread this way
4. Try to avoid close contact with sick people
5. If you are sick, stay home and limit contact with others

In addition to these personal prevention tips, organizations should provide information about preventing communicable disease and follow good housekeeping practices.

These practices include:

1. Making hand washing and/or sanitizing facilities available to patrons
2. Regularly disinfect surfaces that people share and come in contact with their bodies
3. Ensuring all staff wash and/or sanitize their hands regularly
4. Following good food handling practices

Resources:

[CDC Swine Flu Information](#)

[Key Facts about Swine Flu](#)

[Tips for Hand Washing and using Alcohol-based Cleaners](#)

[Proper Hand washing Video](#)

[Stop the Spread of Germs at Work](#)

[Flu Information for Child Care Centers and Schools](#)

More safety materials are available in the [Safe-Wise Consulting Online Library](#)