



TRIBAL FIRST • PO Box 609015 • San Diego, CA 92160  
Phone 800.552-8921 • Fax 858.505-4073

---

## Risk Management Alert – Swine Flu

**Swine Flu** is in the news and it appears that an increasing number of cases are appearing in the United States. Most cases have been in border states with Mexico (California and Texas) but other states such as New York, probably due to people flying from country to country or within the U.S.

On April 28, 2009, the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 4. A Phase 4<sup>1</sup> alert is characterized by confirmed person-to-person spread of a new influenza virus able to cause “community-level” outbreaks.” The increase in the pandemic alert phase indicates that the likelihood of a pandemic has increased, not that a pandemic has started.

Additionally the Center for Disease Control (CDC) issued a travel warning recommending that people avoid non-essential travel to Mexico. CDC continues to issue interim guidance daily on their website and through health alert network notices. CDC’s Division of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is releasing one-quarter of its antiviral drugs, personal protective equipment, and respiratory protection devices to help states respond to the outbreak.

The swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is susceptible to the prescription antiviral drugs. There are four antiviral drugs, however only two will work with the Swine Flu: oseltamivir (brand name Tamiflu ®) and zanamivir (brand name Relenza ®). This is a rapidly evolving situation and CDC will provide updated guidance and new information as it becomes available.

Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious influenza complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started as soon after getting sick as possible, and might not work if started more than 48 hours after illness starts.

Influenza antiviral drugs also can be used to prevent influenza when they are given to a person who is not ill, but who has been or may be near a person with swine influenza. When used to prevent the flu, antiviral drugs are about 70% to 90% effective. When used for prevention, the number of days that they should be used will vary depending on a person’s particular situation.

---

<sup>1</sup> W.H.O. Inter-Pandemic Phase: Phase 1 – Low risk. Phase 2 – Higher risk of human cases. Pandemic Alert: Phase 3 – No or very limited human-to-human transmission. Phase 4 – Evidence of increased human-to-human transmission. Phase 5 – Evidence of significant human-to-human transmission. Pandemic: Phase 6 – Efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission.

### **Personal protection:**

- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.
  - When washing your hands, rub vigorously for 15 seconds (hum the tune to “Happy Birthday”) covering all surfaces and fingers.
  - Scrub nails by rubbing them against the palms of your hands
- You can also use alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Trying to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Staying home from work or school if you are sick.
- Avoid directly touching door handles (if exiting rest room, use a hand towel to open the door) as much as possible.
- If working in an area with the public consider washing your hands more frequently and leave as much space as possible between yourself and others.

Symptoms for adults are similar to regular human flu: fever and chills, a cough, sore throat, aching limbs, headaches, and general malaise. However, there are reports of swine flu also causing diarrhea and vomiting. Pneumonia and respiratory failure can occur leading to death as also happens in regular human flu. Signs that need urgent medical attention include: Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath; Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen; Sudden dizziness; Confusion; or Severe persistent vomiting.

Attached is an OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic. This Guidance was developed based upon traditional infection control and industrial hygiene practices. It is a planning tool and is not for a particular viral strain.

Helpful web sites:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

World Health Organization: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)