



All you need to know about Swine Flu

- Dr. Rakesh Kumar

The increasing prevalence is also an indication that the preventive measures that have been taken so far have not been sufficient enough. More needs to be done to contain the spread of the virus. One can, therefore, no longer be ignorant of the dangers of swine flu, which may break out as a national epidemic unless the Government takes immediate preventive measures to contain the virus.



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A swine flu is yet again raising its ugly head in India. Around 22,186 cases and 1,094 deaths have been recorded in different parts of the country in the past eight months. Among the worst affected has been Gujarat and Maharashtra. The situation is equally grim in other States like Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi. Fearfully, the epidemic has also spread in the southern part of the country with Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. It can well be said that the swine flu storm has been gaining strength day-by-day. One can, therefore, no longer be ignorant of the dangers of swine

flu, which may break out as a national epidemic unless the Government takes immediate preventive measures to contain the virus.

The increasing prevalence is also an indication that the preventive measures that have been taken so far have not been sufficient enough. More needs to be done to contain the spread of the virus.

The first and foremost step towards controlling the spread of the disease is to take basic precautionary measures which can be done by increasing public awareness regarding the symptoms of the disease and subsequently the prevention

strategies. Any suspicion of flu-like symptoms must be taken seriously and individuals too need to understand the importance of getting themselves checked by a doctor as soon as they first witness the symptoms of swine flu. Once that is done, the Government and also healthcare professionals need to get an understanding of the epidemiology. In this context, the importance of a sustained effort on researching, developing, manufacturing and marketing swine flu vaccines also becomes pronounced.

We have observed panic all around when it comes to Swine Flu and as a responsible global healthcare brand, it is our duty to educate and inform people about Swine Flu, how long it lasts, symptoms to look for, prevention and diagnosis. First let us understand what Swine Flu is.

What is Swine Flu?

Swine flu is a disease which affects the respiratory tract of pigs and is caused by influenza viruses. An infected animal typically displays a decreased appetite, nasal secretions, barking cough and listless behaviour. The virus is able to mutate and is easily transmissible among humans.

Origin

Swine Flu was first identified among humans in spring 2009 in Mexico. A few months after the first swine flu cases were reported, rates of confirmed H1N1-related illness increased around the world. As a result, the World Health Organisation declared the infection a global pandemic in August 2010.

Currently, H1N1 is still circulating in humans as a seasonal flu virus and protection against this strain was included in seasonal flu vaccines. More recently, another strain, H3N2 infected humans in 2011.

How long does the disease last?

The general incubation period of a swine flu virus is between three to seven days with more serious infections lasting about nine to 10 days.

Symptoms

H1N1 flu signs and symptoms develop in one to three days in hu-

mans once they are exposed to the virus are similar to those of other flu strains. Common symptoms include:

- Fever (in some cases)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Watery, red eyes
- Body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Nausea and vomiting

Is a vaccine available?

One of the best ways to reduce the chance of contracting the influenza virus is through vaccinations. Talk to your doctor if you are at high risk

of acquiring an infection (especially if you are travelling to a region that have recently reported cases)

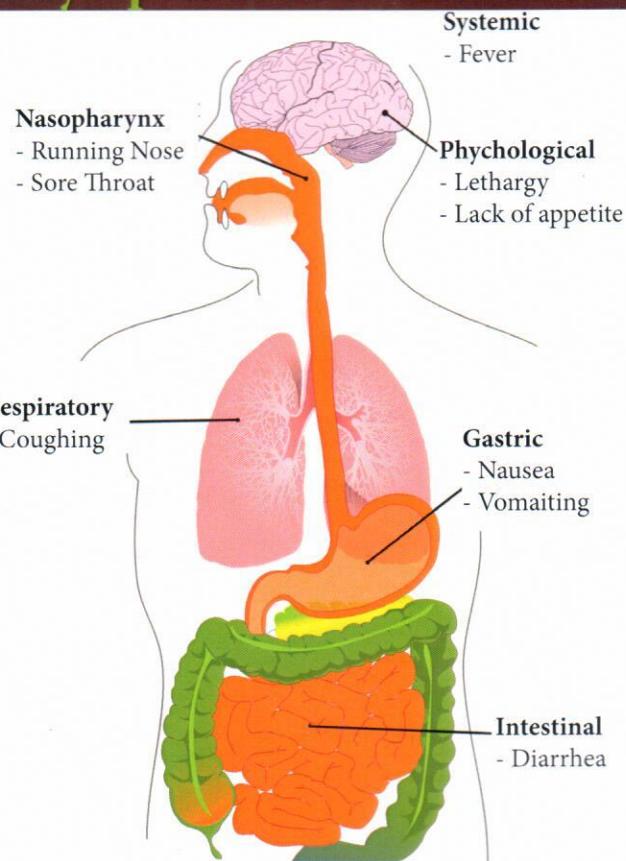
High-risk groups:

- Children younger than 5 years of age, particularly those younger than 2 years
- Senior citizens 65 years and older
- Pregnant women who are within two weeks of delivery, including women who have had a miscarriage
- People suffering from chronic medical conditions, including asthma, emphysema, heart disease, diabetes, neuromuscular disease, or kidney, liver or blood disease
- Those who are immunosuppressed due to certain medications or HIV

Diagnosis

Swine flu is detected by taking a nose or throat swab. This is usually done within the first five days of the illness as this is the most infectious period of the disease. There are a very few

Symptoms of Swine Flu



labs which are authorised to conduct these tests one of which is Metropolis, which is accredited by the CAP. Swab results are delivered within eight to 24 hours and the lab is well equipped with skilled technicians for home collection of sample. The expert team of pathologists is also able to guide clinicians and patients for report analysis and queries surrounding swine flu diagnosis.

Besides vaccines and testing, one of the best ways to prevent swine flu is basic hygiene including regularly washing your hands.

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