

# Cases of human swine influenza in United States and Mexico

Singapore 26 April 2009 ([www.biznewsselect.com](http://www.biznewsselect.com)) The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared that the outbreak of human swine influenza in Mexico and the US constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). However, based on information available, the WHO did not upgrade their Pandemic Alert Phase from 3 to 4, which would signal that a pandemic is imminent.

Preliminary genetic analysis of the influenza viruses have identified them as swine influenza A (H1N1 viruses), containing genetic pieces from swine influenza viruses from North America, Europe and Asia, avian influenza viruses from North America, and human influenza viruses. This particular genetic combination of swine influenza virus segments has not been recognized previously. The US CDC laboratory has identified the same strain of swine influenza A (H1N1) in specimens from patients with respiratory disease in Mexico as that identified in the U.S. cases.

These reports raise concerns about human-to-human spread of a novel influenza virus.

## **What is Swine influenza?**

Swine flu (swine influenza) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Swine flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with swine flu have occurred (most commonly in persons with direct exposure to pigs) and there have been documented cases of human-to-human spread of swine flu. Symptoms of swine flu in humans are similar to symptoms of regular human seasonal flu. An early symptom is high fever, and this can be followed by cough, sore throat, runny nose, and sometimes breathlessness a few days later.

## **Situation in Singapore**

As of 26 April, there are no known cases of human swine flu in Singapore. MOH is monitoring the situation closely and will update the public should there be any new developments.

## **Precautionary Measures at Changi Airport**

As part of national level measures, the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) will be

implementing precautionary measures at Singapore Changi Airport in light of the outbreak of swine flu cases in Mexico and the United States.

From 2300 hours tonight, thermal scanners will be deployed to screen passengers on flights arriving from the US. Screening of all arriving passengers will take place from 0800 hours on 27 April 2009, when thermal scanners will be deployed at the Arrival Halls of Terminals 1, 2 and 3. From Wednesday (29 April 2009), the scanners will also be deployed at the Budget Terminal and Seletar Airport. The scanners will measure the temperature of passengers just before they undergo immigration checks. Passengers with a higher-than-normal temperature will undergo a more thorough medical assessment. These precautionary checks are non-intrusive and have no impact on the time needed by passengers to clear the various airport processes. Flights in and out of Changi Airport are continuing as normal.

In addition, health alert notices containing information about swine flu will be placed at the immigration counters for arriving passengers.

#### **Advice from MOH**

Members of the public are advised to postpone or avoid non-essential travel to Mexico. In the event that travel to Mexico is unavoidable, the public is advised to take precautionary measures such as avoiding crowded areas, coming into contact with sick persons and maintaining high standards of personal hygiene at all times.

Members of the public are also advised to seek immediate medical attention if they develop symptoms of swine flu within seven days of travel to California, Texas or Kansas in USA, or to Mexico. They should also disclose their travel histories to their doctors.

The public should maintain high standards of personal hygiene, such as washing hands frequently with soap and water, especially after contact with respiratory secretions (e.g. after sneezing and coughing). Those who are sick with respiratory illnesses should avoid crowded areas and wear masks if possible.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
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