



# Seven Hills

Foundation & Affiliates

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April 30, 2009

Dear Seven Hills Foundation & Affiliates Colleagues:

Concern over the spread of Swine Flu originating in Mexico has been widely reported in the media. Seven Hills has been monitoring reports and recommendations from reliable sources of health information including the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and Public Health officials in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It is our intention as an organization to keep our employees and other stake holders informed of recommendations from those sources as well as our own plans as an organization to ensure the continuity of our operations should Swine Flu be declared an imminent threat to public health in the communities where Seven Hills provides services.

President Jordan asked the Vice Presidents to identify a primary contact person from each affiliate to serve on the Crisis Leadership Team that has been established to address this potential threat. This team will act as a resource to the President and Vice Presidents in keeping with Administrative Policy #119 ([www.sevenhillsstaff.org](http://www.sevenhillsstaff.org)). This newly formed team will work to ensure that employees are provided with the information they need regarding the health threat, training that would assist them in being prepared personally and professionally, and the support and resources needed to carry-out the organization's plan to ensure continuity of essential services in the event of an actual crisis.

Dr. Jordan has appointed me to coordinate this team regarding our plans to mitigate harm to employees and the people we support through our services and programs. For the duration of the emergency threat, the team will develop and disseminate appropriate educational materials and information that will clarify best practices and provide direction to the field. Employee questions or suggestions can be directed to any of the team members listed below:

Office of the President:	Karen McDonald 508-755-2340 x228
Seven Hills Community Services, Inc.:	Pat Cerrone, RN, 508-856-7930 x 1101
Seven Hills Family Services, Inc.:	Dan Sullivan VP 508-755-2340 x 278
Seven Hills Clinical Associates, Inc.:	Jennifer Billings, RN 508-452-1587
Seven Hills Pediatric Center, Inc.:	Amy Stevens, NP 978-448-3388
Children's Aid & Family Service, Inc.:	Lynne Gorham, LPN 978-343-7395 x 15
Seven Hills Behavioral Health, Inc.:	Joanne Newton 508-996-3147 x 217
The Homestead Group, Inc.:	Bill Krylowicz, RN 401-597-6252

An on line course will be assigned to all staff in E-Academy ([www.eacademy.org](http://www.eacademy.org)) to provide staff with information on the organization's plan for continuity of services in the event of a pandemic emergency. Please check your E-Academy alerts in the next week to locate this assignment and begin your course. In the meantime, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has issued a Public Health Fact Sheet (attached to this letter) that provides answers to commonly asked questions regarding the swine flu. ~~Keep in mind that the people we support~~ need our assistance and support to follow recommendations for staying healthy and may need your help to see a health care professional immediately if they exhibit flu-like symptoms.

If you develop flu-like symptoms and are concerned about your illness, especially if you are at high risk for complications from the flu, you should consult your healthcare provider. Those at high risk for complications include people 65 years or older, people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children. In some people, the flu can cause serious complications, including bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes. Children and adults may develop sinus problems and ear infections.

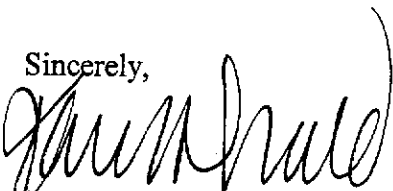
Influenza usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- Fever (a fever of 100.5 or greater)
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)

Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms.

Please be assured that Seven Hills is actively working on additional ways to protect its employees and reduce the threat that Swine flu poses to the children and adults who rely on the supports we provide. Updates will be posted on our intranet site [www.sevenhillsstaff.org](http://www.sevenhillsstaff.org) and through employee notices. Please do not hesitate to contact me, the individuals listed in this letter or your affiliate Vice President should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Karen McDonald

Director of Compliance and Quality Assurance

enc: DPH Fact Sheet

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

## Swine Flu

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

### **What is swine influenza?**

Swine influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by a type of influenza virus. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Most commonly, human cases of swine flu happen in people who are around pigs but it's possible for swine flu viruses to spread from one person to another. In the United States there were 12 cases of swine flu in people from 2006 through 2008. In March and April 2009 there have been many more cases of swine flu than usual in both Mexico and the U.S. and the infections have spread from one person to another.

### **What are the symptoms of swine flu in people?**

Swine flu causes symptoms very similar to seasonal (or human) flu. The most common symptoms of swine flu, like seasonal flu, are fever, cough, and sore throat and can include body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. There have been some people with swine flu who have been sicker and have even died.

### **Is swine flu treatable in people?**

People sick with any type of flu should make sure to drink enough fluids, get plenty of rest, eat healthy foods, wash hands frequently and stay home to avoid spreading the flu to other people. The kinds of drugs used to treat seasonal flu, called antivirals, can also be used to treat swine flu. There have been a few influenza viruses, including the most recent swine flu, that are resistant to some, but not all, of these drugs. Healthcare providers may recommend that people who are sick or appear to be sick with swine flu receive an antiviral medication.

### **How would I know if I have swine flu?**

If you have symptoms of influenza as described above, and especially if you have recently traveled to an area where there have been human cases of swine flu, contact your healthcare provider who will decide what type of testing and treatment is right for you. To diagnose any kind of flu virus, a swab of the inside of your nose needs to be collected by a doctor. Identification of a swine flu virus requires special laboratory testing.

If you think you might have swine flu and you need to see your health care provider, you should call ahead and let them know you might have the flu. That way, precautions can be taken to avoid the spread of flu to others.

### **What if I recently traveled to a region where swine flu in humans has been found?**

If you have recently traveled to an area affected by swine flu, be watchful for any flu-like symptoms. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, stay home to avoid exposing others and contact your healthcare provider; your healthcare provider will decide what type of testing and treatment is right for you. To diagnose any kind of flu virus, a swab of the inside of your nose needs to be collected by a doctor. Identification of a swine flu virus requires special laboratory testing.

### **How can I protect myself and others from swine flu?**

You can protect yourself and others from swine flu the same way that you can protect yourself from seasonal flu. Avoid holding, hugging, kissing, or shaking hands with anyone who has a cold or the flu. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes. Clean things that are touched often like door handles, telephones, etc. If you get sick with a flu-like illness stay home from work and school and avoid contact with others so the virus does not spread.

**All people with swine flu who are not hospitalized, and their household and other close contacts, will need to stay at home to prevent spread of illness to other people.**

### **If I have swine flu, can I stay at home?**

People with mild or moderate illness can and should be cared for at home to prevent spread. Things people who have swine flu who are cared for at home should do include:

- check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a ~~health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema~~
- check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
- stay home for at least 7 days after onset of illness; or until free of symptoms (including fever) for 24 hours, whichever is longer
- get plenty of rest
- drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
- cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- Never cough in the direction of someone else.
- avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill
- be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention

Get medical care right away if the sick person at home:

- has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions) is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

### **Is there a vaccine for swine flu?**

No. Right now there is no vaccine for swine flu. According to CDC, it is unlikely that the vaccine for seasonal flu will prevent swine flu.

### **Is it safe to cook and eat pork and pork products?**

Yes. It is safe to eat properly handled and cooked pork and pork products. Swine flu viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine flu from eating pork or pork products.

### **Why is swine flu important?**

Approximately every 20-40 years, a new strain of the flu virus appears which is very different from the ordinary seasonal flu virus. When this happens most people do not have immunity to this new strain of flu virus and it can spread to many people, across the world, over a short period of time. This is called an influenza pandemic. Some people think that swine flu viruses might play a role in the start of the next pandemic.

**For more information about seasonal flu, pandemic flu, avian flu and swine flu, please visit the websites listed below or contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800.**

- **Massachusetts Department of Public Health website on influenza**  
<http://www.mass.gov/dph/flu>
- **Center for Disease Control (CDC) websites on swine flu**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

**April 27, 2009**