



## INFORMATION ON SWINE FLU – Monday, April 27, 2009

Dear Boston College Students, Faculty and Staff,

This information is a B.C. adaptation of an excellent summary by Gerri Taylor R.N.P., Director of Health Services Bentley University.

As you probably have seen in the media, there is a swine flu outbreak which appears to have started in Mexico.

Boston College has kept up to date through reliable sources over the weekend and want to reassure you that there are currently **no cases in Massachusetts at this point and no cases at Boston College**. I have included information below to make sure that members of our campus community receive updated accurate information, know what to do to prevent illness and know how to proceed should you become sick. The incubation period of the illness is 1 – 4 days. If you were in Mexico or recently with someone who has been in Mexico in the last two weeks and do not have flu like symptoms (listed below), you should be fine. We are in touch with public health officials and they have reassured us. Please know that Boston College has a plan in place which can be easily activated should it become necessary.

Swine flu is a type of flu which normally affects pigs and does not normally infect humans. In this case, it appears that some humans were infected in Mexico and subsequently, the illness spread from one person to other persons. The illness cannot be spread by eating pork or pork products. Although this outbreak began in Mexico, some cases were reported over the weekend in New Zealand, Scotland, Spain, Israel, Canada, Brazil and France and forty cases have been either suspected or reported in the United States, including Kansas, California, Texas, Ohio and New York City. **All cases in the United States appear to be fairly mild – similar to seasonal flu and all patients have recovered and only one needed hospitalization and is recovering.**

We are still seeing a few cases of **normal seasonal influenza** in Massachusetts, so if you develop any flu like symptoms, you may just have the ordinary seasonal influenza, yet should seek medical care so that an accurate diagnosis can be made. **If you have a fever and flu like illness and have traveled to an area where human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) has been identified or have been in contact with ill persons from these areas in the 7 days prior to their illness onset, please call our office and make an appointment to be evaluated.**

There is NO vaccine at this point which can prevent potential infection with this illness. Our seasonal influenza vaccine is not effective against this type of swine flu. **However, the anti-viral medications which we prescribe for seasonal influenza have been found to be effective in treating patients with swine flu in decreasing the symptoms and also the number of days when one is ill.**

For more information, the best and most reliable websites on swine flu are the:

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

[http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/?s\\_cid=swineFlu\\_outbreak\\_001](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/?s_cid=swineFlu_outbreak_001)<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>

WHO (World Health Organization)

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html><http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

Massachusetts Dept. Public Health <http://www.mass.gov/dph>

CDC Travel Health website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

Please be very cautious of media reports, blogs, twitters and other websites, which may not have valid information.

To prevent illness in general:

- **Wash your hands** frequently with soap and warm water (for the time it takes to sing happy birthday twice) or waterless hand sanitizers.
- **Avoid contact** with ill persons. Keep a distance of at least 3 feet from anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- When you cough or sneeze, **cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue or your sleeve or elbow (if you do not have a tissue). Throw used tissues in a trash can.
- After you cough or sneeze, wash your hands **with soap and water**, or use an **alcohol-based** hand gel. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth and if you do – wash your hands well before and afterwards.
- Clean shared phone receivers, keyboards, steering wheels, office equipment and door knobs.
- Refrain from sharing personal items such as forks, spoons, toothbrushes and towels.
- Get plenty of sleep, avoid alcohol and smoking.

**Finally, if you think you are ill with the symptoms of influenza (see below), avoid close contact with others as much as possible. Seek medical care. There are tests that can be done to determine if you have influenza and antiviral prescription medications for treatment of swine flu.**

You should seek medical care if you develop symptoms of seasonal or swine flu – these include:

- Fever of greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Centigrade
- Sore Throat
- Cough
- Stuffy nose
- Chills
- Headache and body aches
- Fatigue
- Some patients have also had nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Some have lethargy or lack of appetite
- Indications for emergency medical care include: Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion or severe or persistent vomiting

Please be assured that we are monitoring the situation very closely and will provide you with updates as needed. Updates will be posted to the BC Info ([www.bc.edu/bcinfo](http://www.bc.edu/bcinfo)) and BC

Prepared ([www.bc.edu/prepared](http://www.bc.edu/prepared)) websites. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Health Services at **617-552-3225**.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas Nary

Director, University Health Services

Boston College