



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

### Quick Facts

#### About...Variant Influenza A Virus

##### What is variant influenza A virus?

Influenza A viruses commonly infect many species of animals, including swine (pigs) and water birds causing regular outbreaks among these animals.

The influenza A viruses that infect animals are very different from the seasonal influenza viruses that infect humans. A virus that normally circulates in swine but can be found in humans is called a "variant" influenza virus and is labeled with a "v." For example, when an H3N2 virus that regularly infects pigs infects a human, it is referred to as an H3N2v virus. This H3N2v virus is different than the H3N2 virus that regularly infects humans during flu season. Although rare, cases of variant influenza virus A infections have been reported in the United States, including Indiana.

##### What are the symptoms of variant influenza A virus?

Symptoms are similar to seasonal influenza infection, and usually include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Diarrhea and nausea occasionally in children

Symptoms usually start about 1 to 4 days after being exposed and last 2 to 7 days. Complications may include pneumonia, hospitalization and death.

##### How is variant influenza A spread?

Variant influenza A is usually spread by respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing. The virus can spread from pigs to people. Infections with variant

influenza viruses are not shown to spread from person to person beyond one or two people. Variant influenza viruses are **not** transmissible by eating pork or pork products. In general, influenza viruses can spread from people to pigs and pigs to people.

### **Who is at risk for variant influenza A?**

Most human infections with variant viruses occur in people with direct exposure to infected pigs, such as people who own pigs or show pigs at fairs. As with other viruses, those who are very young, very old, pregnant or with weakened immune systems are at a greater risk of contracting variant influenza A infection. Public health officials investigate each case of variant influenza to make sure these viruses are not spreading in humans and to limit further exposure to infected animals.

### **How do I know if I have variant influenza A?**

Contact your health care provider if you have flu-like illness and if you have had contact with pigs or other sick people. Your health care provider usually diagnoses influenza by looking at your symptoms and how you may have been exposed. Your health care provider can test you for influenza and decide if treatment is needed. Laboratory testing is needed to determine if you have a variant influenza A infection.

### **How can variant influenza A be treated?**

Treatment for variant influenza A is similar to seasonal influenza, which is usually treated with fever reducers, throat or cough drops, water, and plenty of rest. If the diagnosis is made at the very beginning of the illness, a doctor may prescribe antiviral medication. If the diagnosis is made at the very beginning of the illness, a doctor may prescribe influenza antiviral medicine.

### **How is variant influenza A prevented?**

- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after touching animals.
- Never eat, drink, or put anything in your mouth in animal areas.
- People 65 years and older, young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems should be extra careful around animals.
- If you have animals, including pigs, watch them for signs of illness and call a veterinarian if you think they might be sick.
- Avoid face-to-face contact with animals, especially if they look or act ill.
- Avoid contact with pigs if you have flu-like symptoms.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/> or the ISDH influenza website located at <http://www.in.gov/isdh/25917.htm>.

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