

# **SWINE INFLUENZA VIRUS H1N1**

## **let us make it clear with the help of the official communications**

Dear friends, patients and readers,

I would like to clarify with you the pandemic (*diffusion of a particular disease spread out all around the world*) of Swine Influenza (due by the virus H1N1) that spread out few months ago in Mexico and in South America.

The Swine Influenza has been known for quite some time and the virus that causes it appeared for the first time back in 1918. It normally hits the swine, in particular battery swine, and it is not normally transmitted to human being. However, recently few cases of transmission to human being have been reported (12 cases in the United States since December 2005 till the beginning of 2009), but they are still very rare.



However, sometimes changing may occur, absolutely unpredictable, as always happens in nature, and lately cases of transmission from human being to human being have been reported.

As everybody knows, in April 2009 the first suspected cases were reported in Mexico, and some people died for it, so everyone now pays more attention at the diffusion of the virus.

Today, the most hit countries remain the United States and Mexico. It is strange how in Africa the deaths can still be counting on the fingers of one hand.

I want to immediately dispel a particular: eat some well-cooked swine meat reset the risk of transmission. It is the living virus that causes it.

### **HOW DOES THE DIFFUSION TAKE PLACE?**

As it happens for any other influential syndromes: the disease diffuses in very crowded places. So, avoid those places and take care of you personal hygiene.

If we go to some places and we know that the diffusion there is high, you can use a surgical mask, wash your hands and face carefully. But there are not any rules that preserve us from the infection.

In Italy there have not been any particular precautions, but our Government suggested to people who came back from cities that were hit by the virus to stay at home for few days to evaluate the possible onset of the symptoms.

### **PARTICULARS ABOUT THE DISEASE**

**Symptoms** are the same of a common flu and at first sight they appear banal: flu, symptoms of the respiratory apparatus as cough. Sometimes even nausea and vomit, but it is rare. Then also sleepiness, lost of appetite, sore throat and other unspecified symptoms can occur and they are typical of any other well-known flu.

As we all know, the danger of influenza virus consists in the super infections that follows, and that can cause other important problems.

The suggested treatment that many patient immediately bought in the pharmacy present on the Italian market, are represented by antiviral medicines such as Tamiflu and Relenza. Their efficiency on human being has not been absolutely confirmed by any completed clinical studies. However, it has been documented in vitro (OMS, Agenzia giornalistica Italia which means Italian Journalistic Agency).

The true remedy will be probably the vaccine that will be ready in fall.

Till now, 115.000 cases have been reported and other 570 cases of death were registered. You have to know that, from 1990 to 1994, in Italy the normal flu caused 3304 deaths.. just in our county!

The mortality rate of the swine influenza is 0,4%, compared to the 1,1% of the normal flu, which is almost three times more.

### **WHICH ARE THE SUGGESTIONS OF OUR LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITY**

Our local health authority of Milan (ASL Milan 2) was very careful and helped us to keep track of the pandemia. In April it published some encouraging data ([read it >>](#)): there are not alert, but the vigilance has to continue.

Here it is summed up for you:

*""take measures of personal hygiene (cover your mouth and nose in case of cough and sneeze, use Kleenex and then trash them in a correct way); avoid close contacts and so the frequency of overcrowded places; keep on washing your hands (also with hydro alcoholic solutions, that do not require water).""*

Since the suspected people increased in number, without the appearance of a real syndrome, our local health authority, after some ministerial communications, suggested us to submit to a gag tampon for the viral isolation only those *""subjects who present a critical clinical picture that requires a recovery.""*

And it goes on: *""there is not indication about the use of antiviral medicines for chemoprophylaxis of close contacts if not in limited cases of subjects "who are part of the risk categories for the development of compliances due to the flu (as reported for the indications of the treatment - pregnancy or women who are nursing, asthma, obese cases with the BMI - body mass index - higher than 30), if the clinical situation worsens due, for example, to a virus that is worst compared to the one developed by seasonal flu"".*

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR TRIP**

International trips are not subjected to limitation. However the suggestion remains the one to be prudent, especially for those people affected by chronic pathologies, cases of immunodeficiency, and neoplasia.

### **PERSONAL CONCLUSIONS**

We are all cyclically exposed to a particular disease that tends to reduce our total susceptibility to

general diseases. Unfortunately we are exposed to different infections. Among the many appeared in the last ten years, this swine influenza seems to be more aggressive.

My advice is the one to follow the guidelines to avoid infections and to limit the possibilities to get in contact with the virus.

Once again I highlight the importance of **measures of personal hygiene** that we all have to follow, not only to limit the infection. I would like to remind them to all of you:

- *do not cough everywhere without a hand that cover your mouth or better with a Kleenex,*
- *do not sneeze everywhere without any protection,*
- *never use your right hand to cough or sneeze since you are going to use it to shake hand with a person: use your right hand to shake hands and your left one to sneeze or cough,*
- *often wash your hands and face as a rule of your life.*

I hope I have been useful!

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Dr. Redaelli: [mail@docredaelli.com](mailto:mail@docredaelli.com)