

# FACTS ABOUT SWINE FLU AND H1N1

## WHAT IS SWINE INFLUENZA?

- ▲ Swine influenza refers to a large group of viruses that primarily affect pigs
- ▲ Swine influenza outbreaks and human infection have occurred periodically

## WHAT IS SWINE INFLUENZA H1N1?

- ▲ A common respiratory disease of pigs that can result in high rates of illness
- ▲ It is primarily spread among pigs
- ▲ Pigs can become infected by avian (bird) and human influenza strains

## HAS H1N1 SPREAD TO HUMANS?

- ▲ Human infections primarily involve close contact between people and sick pigs
- ▲ People can not catch swine flu from eating pork
- ▲ If pigs are infected with both human and swine strains, those strains may combine to create a strain more easily transmitted among humans
- ▲ Once people are infected, person to person transmission can occur

## WHAT IS A PANDEMIC?

- ▲ An epidemic that occurs on a global scale when there is no immunity to a new virus
- ▲ Influenza pandemics are rare but recurring; occurrences in 1918, 1957, and 1968
- ▲ Pandemic does not define mortality, only geography

## HOW DO VIRUSES MUTATE?

- ▲ Viruses mutate naturally, as a survival mechanism
- ▲ Since viruses are genetically simple, the mutation process is easier
- ▲ Mutation likeliest in one of two ways:
  - A host (person or pig) is infected with both a common human flu strain and a virulent avian flu strain
    - Viruses combine and mutate in the lung of host
    - New virus created that can pass from human to human
  - Multiple point mutations in birds
    - Many mutations occur within birds from a single virus
    - After several mutations, the virus may acquire the ability to infect humans and then pass from human to human

Source: World Health Organization