

# Novel influenza virus

FUENTE: EFSA

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EFSA is following the recent human cases of the novel influenza A virus outbreak (frequently referred to as swine flu) first reported in Mexico and in the USA and notified to the World Health Organization.

The virus involved in the current human influenza outbreak is a new strain of the H1N1 influenza virus. It is different from the swine influenza virus affecting pigs. This new type of virus includes swine, avian and human virus components. This new virus has not been isolated from animals to date.

Type A influenza viruses can infect humans (human influenza) and a large variety of animals including pigs (swine influenza) and birds and poultry (avian influenza). Influenza viruses affect the respiratory tract and the usual way of transmission is through direct contact or close proximity with affected individuals or animals.

EFSA is not aware of any scientific evidence to suggest that influenza viruses can be transmitted to humans through the consumption of meat such as pork and pork products.

EFSA's role is to provide European risk managers with objective scientific advice on possible animal health and welfare, zoonotic and food safety aspects. EFSA is in close contact with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the European Commission and is ready to provide any further scientific advice which may be required.

## **Can this novel influenza A virus be transmitted to humans by eating pork and pork products?**

The virus involved in the current human influenza outbreak is a new strain of the H1N1 influenza virus. It is different from the swine influenza virus affecting pigs. This new virus has not been isolated from animals to date. EFSA is not aware of any scientific evidence to suggest that influenza viruses can be transmitted to humans through the consumption of meat such as pork and pork products. In the event that pigs were exposed to this new virus and it were to be found in meat, cooking pork thoroughly (to an internal temperature of 70°C) would kill the virus as it does other viruses and bacteria.

In general, influenza viruses affect the respiratory tract and the usual way of transmission is through direct contact or close proximity with affected individuals or animals.

## **What about people who eat raw pork meat?**

This new virus has not been isolated from animals to date and there is no indication that the virus is currently in the pork production chain. EFSA is not aware of any scientific evidence of risk to pork consumers from influenza viruses regardless of the type of pork consumed. However, whilst some consumers may enjoy eating raw meat, longstanding food safety advice is to avoid eating raw meat in order to prevent possible risk of food-borne illness. Cooking meat properly kills bacteria or viruses which may be found in foods.

## **What is swine influenza?**

Swine influenza is a viral infection in pigs caused by type A influenza virus. The mortality level is low and recovery usually occurs within 7-10 days. Swine influenza may infect humans through contact or close proximity with pigs, but does not usually cause severe illness.

### **Information sources for the human influenza outbreak:**

- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control - FAQ](#)
- [European Commission, Directorate-General for Health and Consumers](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States](#)

### **Information sources for swine influenza:**

- [European Commission, Directorate-General for Health and Consumers](#)
- [World Organization for Animal Health](#)
- [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#)