



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION  
Directorate C - Social welfare & health policies  
The Director

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Dear colleagues,

As you are no doubt aware, a new flu virus has recently broken out in Mexico and is spreading to other countries. Often referred to mistakenly as swine flu, its official name is '*novel influenza virus A – H1N1*'.

Cases have also been confirmed in the US, Canada, Spain and the UK. There have been no fatalities so far outside Mexico. The picture is of course changing on an hourly basis.

### **What is the EU doing to prevent the spread of the virus?**

The Commission would like to reassure staff and their families that the Commission is working closely with our Member States in the EU Health Security Committee, with our specialised agencies, and with international bodies to monitor the situation and have measures ready in place to protect staff and citizens.

Further information about the EU's response to the novel flu outbreak can be found here: [http://europa.eu/press\\_room/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/press_room/index_en.htm)

The Commission will keep staff informed of any changes to the situation in Europe.

### **Can I still travel to Mexico or the US?**

EU Health Commissioner Vassiliou has advised trying to avoid any non-essential travel to regions where there are clusters of human-to-human transmission.

For an updated list of regions with community-level clusters, see here: [http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/files/pdf/Health\\_topics/Swineflu\\_map\\_26-04-2009.pdf](http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/files/pdf/Health_topics/Swineflu_map_26-04-2009.pdf)

If you do have to travel to such a region please follow the tips below:

- Before you leave, contact the medical service, who can provide **masks and antiviral drugs to officials on mission** in these regions. Please contact the functional mailbox ADMIN HEALTH ADVICE for further information.
- During your stay, **follow the advice of the local health authorities** where you are, and follow basic rules of good hygiene to avoid spreading germs, such as:
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use waterless alcohol-based hand gels (at least 60% alcohol) when soap is not available.
  - Avoid contact with suspected ill people.
  - Avoid meetings or large groups of people.

- Seek medical care if you feel ill with symptoms such as fever, cough, muscle pain and sore throat, especially if you have had contact with someone with H1N1 or other severe respiratory illness before becoming ill.
- On your return, monitor your health closely for 7 days and consult your doctor or hospital emergency services immediately should you have any of the symptoms above. Please do not come to the office or to the Commission medical service.

### **Is it a pandemic?**

The virus is not yet classed as a pandemic. The World Health Organisation has raised its alert level to phase 4, meaning that there has been verified human-to-human transmission able to cause community-level outbreaks and that there is a risk of pandemic.

### **Is it safe to eat pork and pork products?**

Yes. Swine influenza is not transmissible to people through eating properly prepared and cooked pork meat.

### **Where can I find out more?**

- EU Health portal: [http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/index_en.htm)
- The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: <http://ecdc.europa.eu/>
- Influenza website of the Belgian public health ministry: <http://www.influenza.be/>
- Information portal of the Luxembourg health ministry: <http://www.sante.public.lu/fr/>
- The UK's Health Protection Agency has advice for those who may be returning from a community-level cluster region: [http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb\\_C/1240732817824?p=1240732817665](http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1240732817824?p=1240732817665)
- World Health Organisation website: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/>

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