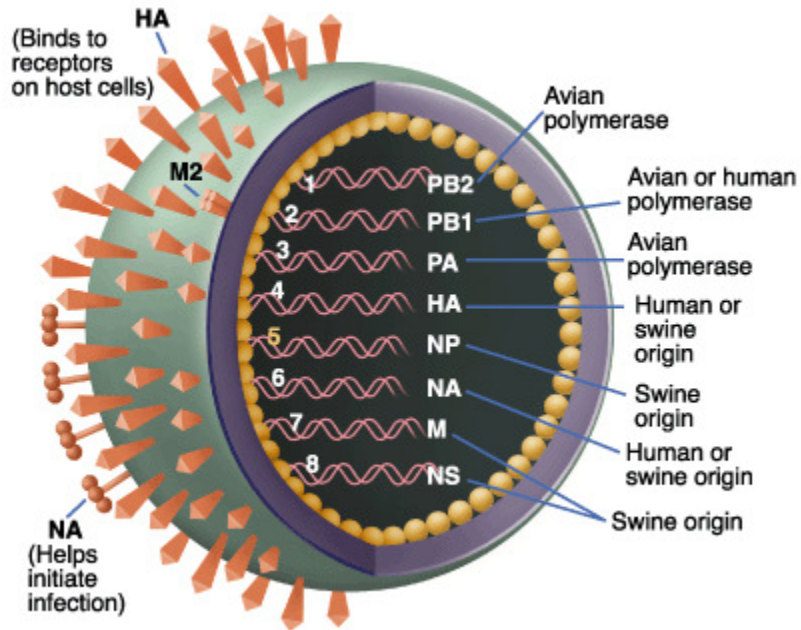


# What You Can Do About Swine Flu

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As new swine flu cases continue to be reported, what precautions are recommended for individuals and families? We asked Andrew Pekosz, an associate professor of molecular microbiology and immunology at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, who has been answering our questions about swine flu. Here are some of his responses.



## ***What kind of personal measures can I take to protect myself against the flu?***

There are a few simple things that will make a big difference. First, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, several times a day. This eliminates influenza and other pathogens that you may have come in contact with. An alcohol-based hand-sanitizing gel would also work. Second, when you sneeze or cough, place your nose and mouth over a disposable tissue or into your shirtsleeve. This will prevent influenza and other pathogens from being sent into the air toward others.

## ***Should I travel by car instead of public transportation?***

At this time, there is no reason for people to avoid public transportation unless they themselves are sick.

## ***Should I wear a mask to the supermarket?***

No. There are not enough cases in the area to merit taking this kind of precaution.

## ***Should I cancel a regular physical activities to avoid the risk of being at the doctor's office with infected people?***

There are not enough cases of influenza in the area for this to be a concern. Physicians' offices and emergency rooms should have specialized plans for bringing in sick individuals for treatment that will minimize contact with other patients.

***You are a public health professional. Might my personal doctor have different recommendations for me? I hate to sound selfish, but I care most about myself and my family.***

You should always seek medical advice from your family physician. My comments should not be taken as personal medical advice; rather, they are meant to clarify scientific facts and provide guidance from a public health point of view.

***Can you really catch flu by touching your eyes? I've heard that, but it's hard to believe.***

There is one strain of flu, H7N7, which has been associated with eye infections, but this isn't a concern in the United States at this time. Bringing your hands close to your face increases the chances of exposing yourself to influenza by breathing it in.