

Stewardship of the Body  
By Virginia Esslinger, RN



“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139)

### The Flu

In the past week there have been increasing numbers of a particular type of flu, called swine flu, that first appeared in Mexico and has caused cases in several other countries including the United States.

Federal health officials have declared an emergency because they are concerned that this flu has the potential for causing a widespread pandemic, which is an epidemic that occurs worldwide. The Spanish flu of 1918-19, the Asian Flu of 1957 and the Hong Kong Flu of 1968 were pandemics because there were many cases worldwide and many deaths.

It is too soon to know if that will happen this year with this particular swine flu. What makes health officials concerned is the fact that the virus seems to be a mixture of swine, bird and human flu and has mutated so that it can be spread from human to human. Regular swine flu only can be spread from pigs to humans.

Until there is more information it is recommended that we do the following:

- Be careful of traveling to certain provinces in Mexico. If you or someone you know has recently traveled to Mexico, be vigilant for symptoms of the flu.
- If symptoms occur, see a health care professional immediately as the antiviral medications have been effective in treating the flu and preventing complications but should be taken within 48 hours of getting sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough and immediately discard the tissue. If a tissue is not available sneeze or cough into your elbow, not your hand.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after sneezing or coughing and frequently during the day. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers often. Carry a small bottle or packets with you and do not be afraid to use them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth as that is the primary way in which the virus invades the body.
- If you do get sick, stay home from work or school to avoid infecting others.

Symptoms of the swine flu are similar to other types of flu and include:

- Fever, 100.5 or higher
- Headache
- Body aches
- Fatigue
- Cough, runny or stuffy nose
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea

Complications of this flu as well as seasonal flu can include pneumonia and respiratory failure as well as worsening of pre-existing medical problems. Source: Centers for Disease Control (CDC)