

# Antiviral Drugs and Swine Influenza

## Antiviral Drugs

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) with activity against influenza viruses, including swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs can be used to treat swine flu or to prevent infection with swine flu viruses. These medications must be prescribed by a health care professional. Influenza antiviral drugs only work against influenza viruses -- they will not help treat or prevent symptoms caused by infection from other viruses that can cause symptoms similar to the flu.

There are four influenza antiviral drugs approved for use in the United States (oseltamivir, zanamivir, amantadine and rimantadine). The swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses that have been detected in humans in the United States and Mexico are resistant to amantadine and rimantadine so these drugs will not work against these swine influenza viruses. Laboratory testing on these swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses so far indicate that they are susceptible (sensitive) to oseltamivir and zanamivir.

## Benefits of Antiviral Drugs

**Treatment:** If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious influenza complications. Influenza antiviral drugs work best when started soon after illness onset (within two 2 days), but treatment with antiviral drugs should still be considered after 48 hours of symptom onset, particularly for hospitalized patients or people at high risk for influenza-related complications.

**Prevention:** Influenza antiviral drugs also can be used to prevent influenza when they are given to a person who is not ill, but who has been or may be near a person with swine influenza. When used to prevent the flu, antiviral drugs are about 70% to 90% effective. When used for prevention, the number of days that they should be used will vary depending on a person's particular situation.

## CDC Recommendation

CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with swine influenza viruses.

- Oseltamivir (brand name Tamiflu ®) is approved to both treat and prevent influenza A and B virus infection in people one year of age and older.

- Zanamivir (brand name Relenza ®) is approved to treat influenza A and B virus infection in people 7 years and older and to prevent influenza A and B virus infection in people 5 years and older.

Recommendations for using antiviral drugs for treatment or prevention of H1N1 virus influenza will change as we learn more about this new virus.

Clinicians should consider treating any person with confirmed or suspected swine influenza with an antiviral drug. Visit:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/recommendations.htm> for specific recommendations.