



The easy way to destroy the Swine 'flu virus.

H1N1 human Swine 'flu, like most influenza viruses, is easy to kill. The challenge is to get them before they invade you.

Transmission

Influenza viruses are spread primarily through touch, not inhalation. Airborne viral particles expelled during coughing, sneezing and talking are an important source of transmission. However, people usually infect themselves by touching infected surfaces, like door handles and railings, with their hands, and then touching their face. Regular handwashing plays a crucial role in preventing transmission, and is even more effective when combined with regular disinfection of surfaces to minimize hand transfer of the virus.

How long can the virus survive?

Influenza A viruses (such as the Swine 'flu virus) survive for up to 12 hours on dry porous surfaces (e.g. cloth or paper), up to 48 hours on nonporous surfaces (e.g. stainless steel or hard plastic), and up to 72 hours on wet surfaces. Once on the hands, survival times are much shorter, being severely affected by rapid drying. So dry your hands thoroughly after washing. Banknotes, which consist of a variety of materials depending on their country of origin, have proven to be a remarkably persistent source of 'flu viruses. A study published in May 2008 found that some strains of influenza virus survived for as long as 17 days on bank notes which were heavily contaminated. Hence the origin on the phrase "filthy money".

Prevention

Influenza viruses, including the Swine 'flu virus, can be destroyed by household disinfectants containing substances such as alcohol, peroxide, chlorine or certain ammonium compounds. Products registered for use against the Influenza A virus (including the currently-circulating Swine 'flu virus) include Lysol, Clorox, Comet, Mr. Clean (Antibacterial), Windex Antibacterial and Pine Sol Disinfectant. A detailed list is available at <http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/influenza-a-product-list.pdf>.

Cleaning tips

- Clean surfaces that are touched frequently, frequently – at least every hour for surfaces in public use.
- Frequent use of room deodorizers to disinfect the air is not recommended.
- To clean carpets, use vacuum cleaners equipped with HEPA filtration.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions on cleaning products.
- Never mix ammonia and bleach, as this can produce a lethal gas. So unless you have carefully read the label, never mix or combine cleaning products.
- If proprietary disinfectants are not available, a dilute solution of household bleach can be used to disinfect hard surfaces (e.g. bathrooms, kitchens, floors etc.). Use 15ml (1 Tablespoon) of 5.25% household bleach to 946 ml (1 quart) of clean water. Apply this to a cleaned surface, preferably with a cloth moistened with the bleach solution, and allow the surface to remain wet for at least 5 minutes. Pour bleach in a well-ventilated room, wearing skin and eye protection.