



Frequently asked questions – Swine Influenza and Air Travel

Is it safe to travel?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has **NOT** issued any advice to limit travel or restrict the movement of people and goods. The WHO is constantly reviewing the situation and any changes will be made on their web site: www.who.int. Passengers should also check with their national public health authorities for the latest local information and advice.

The aviation industry has been a part of the global efforts on pandemic preparedness, particularly in light of the potential threat posed by avian flu. Industry and governments are much better prepared to deal with public health challenges than even a few years ago as a result of these efforts.

Airlines, through IATA, are coordinating closely with ICAO and WHO to facilitate the expeditious implementation of any measures deemed necessary.

Should I postpone my trip to Mexico?

There are no WHO travel advisories for any destination or place at this time. Travellers should also check with their national public health authorities for any localised advice.

Why have some governments issued travel advisories?

There are no WHO travel advisories for any destination or place at this time. Some national governments may issue advice to travellers with an extra level of caution.

What should travellers do?

Travellers should take some simple precautions like washing their hands frequently, avoiding contact with sick persons and with live animals in markets. Those travelling to infected areas should be extra vigilant. Travellers who are ill are advised to consult with their doctor prior to undertaking any travel.

Vigilance by all is critical. Travellers, particularly those returning from affected areas, should seek professional medical advice if they have any flu-like symptoms.

Are passengers more at risk of catching swine influenza on a plane?

Normal influenza can be transmitted in many situations - at home between family members, in shopping malls, on the street or in aircraft. At this time, the WHO has not identified any specific risks from air travel. The WHO and experts are still gathering information about the particular type of Swine Influenza in question.

Passengers should be reassured that modern aircraft have very advanced air filtration systems which ensure a high level of air quality despite the confined environment. And, as always, it is important that any passenger who is unwell consult with his or her doctor prior to undertaking any travel.

Is it safe to eat pork products served on board aircraft?

The WHO has not given any indication that eating pork products is a risk.

Should I wear a mask on board flights?

The WHO has issued no advice indicating that passengers should wear masks on board aircraft - or anywhere else.

What should airlines be doing?

In normal operations airlines take measures to ensure a safe and healthy environment on board aircraft. For example, passengers should be reassured that modern aircraft are equipped with very advanced air filtration systems which ensure a high level of air quality despite the confined environment.

Should additional measures become necessary to deal with Swine Influenza, IATA follows the guidance of the international experts - the WHO - and advises airlines accordingly.

What is IATA doing?

The global response to the challenges of Swine Influenza is being led by the WHO which is working closely with national public health authorities and with NGOs and industry.

IATA is coordinating closely with the WHO as well as with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). IATA has made available best practice guidelines to help airlines deal with public health emergencies. Along with a general guideline for dealing with public health emergencies, IATA's guidance material covers maintenance, passenger agents, cabin crew, cleaning crew and cargo. Passengers should be reassured that there is a coordinated effort between industry and government.

Why is temperature monitoring equipment being deployed in some airports?

The WHO has not advised any governments to implement airport screening procedures - including the use of devices that monitor body temperature to detect passengers fever. Some governments have implemented these measures as an extra measure of precaution. Our experience with SARS shows that speedy implementation of such measures is possible, should such measures be required or advised by the WHO.

Why are there no screening measures in some airports?

At this time, there is no specific guidance from the WHO to implement airport screening. As an extra precaution, some public health authorities have implemented screening measures. Our experience with SARS shows that speedy implementation of screening devices, including those that monitor body temperature to detect passengers with fever, is possible should such measures be required or advised by the WHO.

Is it safe for crews to be working on aircraft?

At this time, the WHO has not identified any special risks arising from air travel - for passengers or for crew. Should passengers become unwell while on board, IATA has worked with the WHO on guidance for crew to allow for safe handling and care. These can be found at http://www.iata.org/NR/rdonlyres/DD29D97F-0E8C-4CBD-B575-1F5067174941/0/Guidelines_cabin_crew_finalDec2008.pdf.