



California Department of Public Health  
**Interim Mask/Respirator Guidance  
for the Public During Swine Flu Outbreak**



**April 30, 2009**

*Because of the nature of this outbreak these recommendations may change.*

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the public on when facemasks\* or respirators\*\* should be used in several situations.

No single action will provide complete protection, but an approach combining the following steps can help decrease the likelihood of transmission. These actions include:

- keeping hands clean by washing them with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- covering coughs and sneezes;
- having ill people stay home except to seek medical care; and
- minimizing contact with others in the household.

### **General Public**

During the swine influenza outbreak, whenever possible, rather than relying on the use of facemasks or respirators, **try to stay at least 6 feet away from people who might be ill in areas where transmission of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus has been confirmed.** When close contact with people who might be ill cannot be avoided, the use of facemasks or respirators in areas where there is community transmission of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus should be considered.

### **Persons at Increased Exposure Risk**

**Respirators** (e.g., N95 masks) should be considered for use primarily by individuals for whom **close contact with an infectious person is unavoidable.**

This can include individuals who must care for a family member with swine influenza at home. The ill person should wear a facemask as described in the next section.

### **Persons that Have Been Diagnosed with Probable or Confirmed Swine Influenza Virus**

In areas where person to person transmission of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus has been confirmed, **ill persons should remain at home** except to seek medical care. Ill people should wear a **facemask** when they are outside of their homes interacting with members of the public to protect their nose and mouth and to reduce the wearers' likelihood of coughing on others.

\***Facemask (mask)** – disposable masks such as surgical, dental, medical procedure, isolation, or laser masks. Such facemasks have several designs including: 1) affixed to the head with two ties, conforms to the face with the aid of a flexible adjustment for the nose bridge, and may be flat/pleated or duck-billed in shape, 2) pre-molded, adheres to the head with a single elastic band, and has a flexible adjustment for the nose bridge. 3) flat/pleated and affixes to the head with ear loops. Facemasks cleared by the FDA for use as medical devices have been determined to have specific levels of protection from penetration of blood and body fluids.

\*\***Respirator** – refers to an N95 or higher filtering facepiece respirator certified by the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Full CDC guidance document at:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/masks.htm> and  
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/maskguidancecommunity.html>