

Pandemic closer but not inevitable: Lancet

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A pandemic of swine flu has edged nearer but the threat can be avoided if governments and individuals join in limiting the contagion, The Lancet said in an editorial on Tuesday.

"The world has moved closer towards a pandemic, but it is not yet inevitable," the prestigious British health journal said.

It praised "effective mechanisms" set in motion by governments and international agencies.

In the early stages of the scare, these had helped to protect the public, drawing on lessons learned from the outbreak of H5N1 [bird flu](#) earlier this decade, it said.

Even so, "the public should expect further deaths from this [swine influenza](#) outbreak. The Lancet certainly expects the number of those infected to increase and the spread of infection to expand."

Looking at what should now be done, The [Lancet](#) said "containment of the outbreak is no longer feasible" and countries should focus on easing the impact of the virus on their populations.

In addition to national contingency plans, responsibility for preventing a full-blown pandemic lies with individuals, it said.

"Vigilance, and not alarm, is needed, with readiness to self-isolate oneself at home if an influenza-like illness develops. Such home

isolation, combined with other measures of social distancing, are most likely to stop the spread of swine [influenza](#).

"These actions could buy the necessary time to boost stockpiles of antivirals and develop a vaccine against this virus, which will inevitably take months rather than weeks to prepare and distribute."

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