

# Suspected swine flu deaths in Mexico top 100

April 27 2009, By DAVID KOOP , Associated Press Writer

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Nuns wear face masks during a closed door mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City, Sunday, April 26, 2009. Churches stood empty Sunday in predominantly Roman Catholic Mexico City after services were canceled, and health workers screened airports and bus stations for people sickened by a new strain of swine flu that experts fear could become a global epidemic.(AP Photo/Dario Lopez-Mills)

(AP) -- The Mexican government is trying to stem the spread of a deadly strain of swine flu as a new work week begins by urging people to stay home Monday if they have any symptoms of the virus believed to have killed more than 100 people.

Officials have already closed schools in three states and canceled hundreds of public events. But as the number of suspected cases and deaths rose again on Sunday - and millions returning to work on Monday - they looked to other measures to control the outbreak.

Labor Secretary Javier Lozano Alarcon said employers should isolate anyone showing up for work with fever, cough, sore throat or other signs of the flu.

Fear of the disease caused most residents of Mexico's capital to hunker down at home on Sunday. The cardinal said Mass in a shuttered cathedral. Soccer teams played to empty stadiums. A television variety show filled studio-audience seats with cardboard cutouts bearing broad smiles on their faces.

For the first time in 300 years, the cathedral in [Mexico](#) City's main plaza pulled an icon of the Lord of Health from storage, and worshippers placed it on the principal altar.

The Rev. Cuauhtemoc Islas said it would remain there until the medical emergency is over, Mexico's government news agency Notimex reported.

But the bad news kept coming. Health Secretary Jose Angel Cordova late Sunday that the number of suspected [swine flu](#) cases in Mexico had climbed to 1,614, including 103 deaths.

Authorities were trying to confirm how many new cases were caused by the virus, which has been confirmed or suspected in at least a half-dozen other countries and has caused the U.S. to declare a [health emergency](#).

But even as Mexican officials urged those with flu symptoms to seek medical help, some complained of being turned away.

In Toluca, a city west of the capital, one family said health authorities refused to treat a relative on Sunday who had full-blown [flu symptoms](#) and could barely stand. The man, 31-year-old truck driver Elias Camacho, was even ordered out of a government ambulance, his father-

in-law told The Associated Press.

Paramedics complained that Camacho - who had a fever, was coughing and had body aches - was contagious, Jorge Martinez Cruz said.

Family members took him by taxi to a public hospital, but a doctor there denied Camacho was sick and told the trio to leave, Martinez said.

"The government told us that if we have these symptoms, we should go to these places, but look how they treat us," Martinez said. Camacho was finally admitted to the hospital - and placed in an area marked "restricted" - after a doctor at a private clinic notified state health authorities, Martinez said.

Jose Isaac Cepeda, who has had fever, diarrhea and joint pains since Friday, said he was turned away from two hospitals - the first because he isn't registered in the public health system, and the second "because they say they're too busy."

The streets of the capital were largely deserted Sunday. The city canceled its weekly cycling day, in which major boulevards are closed to cars. The city's two main chains of movie theaters announced they were closing temporarily. Restaurants and bars were empty.

"We normally get 200 diners over the course of the day," said waiter Eduardo Garcia, wearing a surgical mask as he presided over empty tables of an Italianni's restaurant in the Zona Rosa neighborhood. "Today's pretty bad. Nobody's coming out of their houses."

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Associated Press writer Olga R. Rodriguez in Toluca contributed to this report.

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