

CDC: New virus lacks genes of 1918 killer flu

May 1 2009, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- The new swine flu virus lacks genes that made the 1918 pandemic strain so deadly, a U.S. health official said Friday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the new [virus](#) is "a very unusual" four-way combination of human [genes](#) and genes from swine viruses found in North America, Asia and Europe.

CDC flu chief Dr. Nancy Cox said the good news is "we do not see the markers for virulence that were seen in the 1918 virus."

The global flu epidemic early last century was possibly the deadliest outbreak of all time. The virus was an H1N1 strain - different from the H1N1 strain involved in the current outbreak - and struck mostly healthy young adults. Experts estimate it killed about 40 to 50 million people worldwide.

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Citation: CDC: New virus lacks genes of 1918 killer flu (2009, May 1) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-05-cdc-virus-lacks-genes-killer.html>

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