

Harvard survey: Swine flu in, affection out

May 8 2009, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- Thanks to swine flu, there's a little less hugging and kissing in the United States.

About one in 10 Americans have stopped hugging and kissing close friends or relatives because of concerns about swine flu, according to a survey released Friday. About the same number have stopped shaking hands.

Health officials have emphasized other measures to prevent spread of the virus, like washing hands and using hand sanitizers. The survey found about two-thirds of Americans are taking such steps.

"This outbreak has permeated a lot of American life," said Robert Blendon, the Harvard School of [Public Health](#) researcher who led the polling.

The telephone survey also found about six in 10 Americans are not currently worried that they or someone in their immediate family will get sick from the virus in the next year. The level of concern has been declining, Blendon said.

However, parents of school-aged children were more concerned about swine flu infections. Many parents said schools have not provided information about what steps are being taken to prevent spread of the virus.

More than 1,000 people participated in the survey. Harvard receives

funding from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to do surveys on public health concerns, but CDC does not dictate how the surveys are designed, Blendon said.

The survey was done Tuesday and Wednesday and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.6 percentage points.

The CDC said Friday the number of confirmed swine flu cases in the U.S. is now at 1,639, and new illnesses appear to still be occurring. That number includes 57 hospitalizations and two deaths.

On the Net:

CDC [swine flu](#) web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

Harvard School of Public Health: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu>

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Citation: Harvard survey: Swine flu in, affection out (2009, May 8) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-05-harvard-survey-swine-flu-affection.html>

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