

# The River Cities DAILY TRIBUNE

'Living In a Tech World' Column

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## Can The Swine Flu Virus Attack Your Computer?

If it is not one kind of virus it's another in today's Tech World. Today we are going to take a break in our series on how to muck-up your computer to see how to protect your computer from the Swine Flu or, to be politically correct, H1N1 virus. As our reliance on the utility and information available on the Internet increases so does the target on our backs for the 'bad guys' that I'm often talking about.

The guys that want to attack and control your computer are becoming masters of Social Engineering. Any time there is a global headline such as 'Swine Flu Pandemic' it gets people's attention and they want as much information and breaking news as possible. Attackers know this and prey on that fact to lure people into becoming victims of malware or phishing attacks or conning them into spending money in some way. Domain names related to 'swine flu' are being snatched up and may be used to host malware, or for spam campaigns or phishing attacks. Be sure you exercise common sense when it comes to emails and file attachments related to swine flu. As I've said before Think before You Click. And don't believe everything you read in an email.

Here are my recommendations on safe places to visit for the real facts and a couple of places that have good information and are inadvertently entertaining.

**WebMD** (<http://tinyurl.com/cfn7ld>) is my choice for best site for finding out more as an average citizen. It has a good explanation of what it is, the symptoms and treatments in and an easy to understand Q&A. It also has links to other resources and a 3 min video from the CDC explaining the epidemic.

### **Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009\\_swine\\_flu\\_outbreak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_swine_flu_outbreak)) is a close second. It has more information but because of the nature of Wikipedia it can have some information that is not fully vetted when it appears.

If you are not familiar with Wikipedia it is written collaboratively by volunteers from all around the world; anyone can edit it. Because Wikipedia is an ongoing work to which, in principle, anybody can contribute, it differs from a paper-based reference source in important ways. In particular, older articles tend to be more comprehensive and balanced, while newer articles more frequently contain significant misinformation, un-encyclopedic content, or vandalism. Users need to be aware of this to obtain valid information and avoid misinformation that has been recently added and not yet removed. However, unlike  
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a paper reference source, Wikipedia is continually updated, with the creation or updating of articles on topical events within seconds, minutes, or hours, rather than months or years for printed encyclopedias. This site even explains information that is posted on other sites, such as a chart that shows the WHO levels of alert and what they mean.

**CDC** (<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>)

A good source of both practical citizen information and scientific information. It is more important as a resource for media and health professionals tracking the pandemic.

**PandemicFlu.gov** (<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>)

This is an official U.S. Government Web site managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. A frequently updated portal to information from worldwide sources. Links to videos and live video presentations.

**WHO, World Health Organization** (<http://tinyurl.com/db8oxr>)

Like the CDC more information for professionals and media. This one covers the international circumstances they are posting daily briefings.

And for a little entertainment with your information: **You Tube - 1976 Swine Flu Propaganda**. (<http://tinyurl.com/cmzgu9>) It looks so innocent and wholesome through today's prism.

And Google has two interesting sites. One is a **Google Map** (<http://tinyurl.com/cywddc>); with their typical pin presentation showing the confirmed and suspected cases and an experimental site **Google Trends** (<http://www.google.org/flutrends/>) that tracks the search term 'flu' by frequency and location and shows a graph of the changes. The theory being that it may reflect people's interest and concern.

To keep some of the web addresses short I've used TinyUrl, a service that makes it easier to pass on a long URL. Just type it in as you read it and it opens a page that shows the real address and a link to go there. And, as always, you can go to my website for these links and more.

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