

Being Prepared for

AVIAN INFLUENZA

Avian Influenza: "Bird Flu"

What is bird flu?

Avian influenza ("bird flu") is a contagious disease caused by bird influenza viruses which normally infect poultry (domestic ducks, chickens, turkeys) and migratory waterfowl.

How contagious is bird flu?

The current bird flu virus (called H5N1) is highly contagious among poultry and certain birds. It can also be passed from birds to humans, but not as easily as it spreads among birds.

Why should I be concerned about bird flu?

If the virus adapts so that it can spread easily from person to person, it could cause a pandemic, resulting in:

- widespread disease outbreaks
- restrictions on the movement of people
- potentially large numbers of sick and dying
- business closures and transport systems disruptions

What are the symptoms of bird flu?

- fever and chills
- cough
- runny nose
- sore throat
- muscle aches, headache
- severe pneumonia that develops suddenly
- sudden breathing problems
- other possible symptoms: eye inflammation, severe diarrhea, encephalitis (brain inflammation), seizures, or coma

What is the difference between flu and a cold?

- Flu symptoms are usually more severe than cold symptoms and can affect the whole body. Flu usually starts suddenly with high fever, chills, severe body aches, extreme tiredness, headache, and dry cough. A person with the flu is contagious for 24 hours before becoming sick and for 3-5 days after becoming sick.
- Colds are generally milder than flu and usually affect just the nose and throat. Colds begin slowly with a sore or scratchy throat, sneezing, and runny or stuffy nose; a mild cough develops a few days later. Fever is rare in adults and older children, and extreme tiredness is not a cold symptom.

How can I prevent bird flu?

Personal health practices

- Hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent spread of infections.
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Use waterless sanitizing gel if soap and water are unavailable.
 - Wash your hands after sneezing, coughing, blowing your nose, or using any shared keyboards, phones, or tools.
 - Wash your hands prior to touching your face, mouth, or nose, and before eating.
 - Wash your hands after contact with any ill person.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Keep your distance – at least 3 feet – from people who are ill, coughing, or sneezing.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Eat, rest, and exercise in moderation.
- Get a regular flu shot if available. This will not prevent bird flu, but it can decrease the chance of confusing regular seasonal flu with bird flu.
- In a pandemic, avoid crowds and public transport.

Vaccines: There are no human bird flu vaccines available yet; some are in development.

Antiviral medications: Prescription antiviral drugs can help prevent the disease if you have been exposed and can be used to treat bird flu, but supplies are very limited.

How can I prepare at home?

Supply your home with the following:

- cough and congestion supplies: tissues, surgical masks, decongestants, cough suppressants, fever medication
- alcohol-based hand cleaners
- food and water to last for 10-15 days or more, as circumstances dictate
- flashlight and batteries
- reliable thermometer for humans
- clean water supply or home purification system
- sufficient cash (if banks, ATMs are unavailable)
- key documents and ID (passport, government issued IDs, health records, health insurance papers)
- medical supplies including prescription medicines
- pet food

How do I stay healthy at work during a pandemic?

- Wash hands frequently as noted on p. 7.
- Use disinfecting wipes to clean common surfaces (keyboards, phones, door handles) or use gloves.
- Stay at least 3 feet from people who are sneezing or coughing.
- Carry and use masks as directed by your doctor.
- Cancel non-essential and face-to-face meetings.
- Know who to contact and how (phone, email, hotline) if you have questions about whether you should come to work.
 - High absentee rates are likely, so if you are well and able to work you should contact your supervisor.

What if I become ill?

If you or a family member become ill with these symptoms:

- ✓ sudden congestion or trouble breathing AND
- ✓ -fever higher than 100.4° F AND
- ✓ -cough AND
- ✓ at least 1 of the following: sore throat, joint aches, muscles aches, or weakness

- Contact your health care provider. Before going to the clinic or hospital, describe your symptoms and any possible exposure to sick people or animals, or travel to bird flu-infected areas.
- Notify your supervisor.
 - Do NOT go to work if you develop these symptoms.
 - Do NOT go to work if you have been exposed within the past 3 days to someone with flu-like illness.

What if I become ill at work?

- Call your supervisor (do not meet in person) and report your symptoms.
- Stay away from other people, staff, and visitors.
- Put on a mask if instructed to do so.
- Go home if so instructed.
- Call your health care provider.

When can I return to work?

- If you have had a flu-like illness, you can usually return to work (after obtaining clearance from your health care provider and employer) if you:
 - have fully recovered
 OR
 - are on effective antiviral medication
- If you were exposed to someone with flu-like illness, you may return to work after staying home for 3 days (after last exposure), if you have not gotten sick.

Precautions to take if you are in an area affected by bird flu:

- Avoid contact with chickens, ducks, or other poultry and their waste.
- Children are at higher risk; teach them to avoid contact with birds.
- Do not handle wild birds – dead or alive.
- Do not adopt new birds.
- Do not transport birds, even if you think they are healthy.
- If you unintentionally come into contact with birds in an affected area:
 - Wash your hands immediately with soap and water.
 - Remove shoes outside the house and clean them well.
 - Check your temperature at least daily for 7 days.
 - Call your health care provider if temperature is over 99.5.

Repatriation vs. sheltering in place - consider these issues:

- Long flights home may pose a greater risk for immediate infection of travelers.
- Those who shelter in place may be at a greater risk for the consequences of civil disorder and commodity disruption brought on by a pandemic.
- Travel plans may be unexpectedly disrupted during a pandemic. Travelers may be detained for quarantine, either at connection points in foreign countries or at ports of entry into the U.S. Duration of quarantine may vary and may be prolonged.
- Once a pandemic begins, the U.S. may not be able to offer much more in the way of medical care or other services than many other countries in the world.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE