

Bird Flu Facts

For More Information:

Oregon Public Health Hotline

1-800-978-3040, Toll-Free
503-872-6900, Portland-metro

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Toll-Free:

1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
1-888-232-6348 TTY
E-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov

Clinician Info:
877-554-4625

You can also visit the following
Web sites for the latest travel
advisories and updated
information on bird flu:

Oregon Department of Human Services:

[www.dhs.state.or.us/
publichealth/acd/flusurv/
zooflu.cfm](http://www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/acd/flusurv/zooflu.cfm)

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention:

[www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/
index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm)

World Health Organization:

[www.who.int/foodsafety/
micro/avian/en/](http://www.who.int/foodsafety/micro/avian/en/)

Introduction

- Bird flu is an infection caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) viruses. These flu viruses occur naturally among birds. Wild birds worldwide carry the viruses in their intestines, but usually do not get sick from them. However, bird flu is very contagious among birds and can make some domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, very sick and kill them.
- Bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, but several hundred cases of human infection with bird flu viruses have occurred since 1997.
- The virus was first isolated in birds in South Africa in 1961.
- Outbreaks of bird flu have recently occurred among poultry in nine countries in Asia, including Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. More than 100 million birds in the affected countries have either died from the disease or have been killed in order to try to control the outbreak. It is believed that these outbreaks are ongoing. Outbreaks have also occurred in Europe, Canada and the U.S.
- Human infections with this type of flu have been reported in Thailand and Vietnam during recent outbreaks.

Risks to Humans

- The first case of bird flu that spread from a bird to a human was seen during an outbreak in poultry in Hong Kong in 1997. The virus caused severe respiratory illness in 18 people, 6 of whom died. Most recently, human cases of bird flu have occurred in Thailand and Vietnam during large outbreaks in poultry. The death rate for these reported cases has been about 70 percent. Most of these cases occurred from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces—however, it is believed that a few cases of human-to-human spread of this virus have occurred.
- So far, spread of this virus from person to person has been rare and spread has not continued beyond one person. However, because all influenza viruses have the ability to change, scientists are concerned that the bird flu virus could one day be able to infect humans and spread easily from one person to another.
- Because these viruses do not commonly infect humans, there is little or no immune protection against them in the human population. If the bird flu virus changed to infect people and spread easily from person to person, an “influenza pandemic” (worldwide outbreak of disease) could begin.
- The current risk to Americans from the bird flu outbreak in Asia is low. The strain of the virus found in Asia has not been found in the United States. There have been no human cases of bird flu in the United States. It is possible that travelers returning from affected countries in Asia could be infected. Since February 2004, medical and public health personnel have been watching closely to find any such cases.

If you have a disability and need this document in an alternate format, call (503) 731-4024 (503) 731-4031 TTY

Symptoms

- The symptoms of bird flu in people range from typical flu-like symptoms (such as fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches), to eye infections, pneumonia, acute respiratory distress, diarrhea, brain disease and other severe and life-threatening complications.

Controlling the Spread of Disease

- The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) currently advises travelers to countries in Asia with known outbreaks of bird flu to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals.
- When planning an international trip, check the CDC Web site or call their public information hotline at 1-888-246-2675 for the latest travel advice.
- If you are not feeling well, wash your hands frequently and cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Avoid touching or kissing friends and family members, avoid public gatherings, and stay a safe distance (more than three feet) away from other people to avoid spreading your illness.
- If you have recently traveled to a country where bird flu has been reported and are becoming ill with typical flu symptoms, be sure to tell your healthcare provider about your travel and whether you visited poultry farms or came into close contact with someone who had been diagnosed with bird flu, or with animals in live food markets, or any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with droppings from poultry or other animals.
- Touching a surface or object that someone with flu has coughed on and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes can also spread disease.
- People with the flu are most likely to be infectious only when they have symptoms, such as fever or cough. As a precaution against spreading the flu, the CDC recommends that people with the flu stay home from work, school, or other areas where they may come into contact with other people until their symptoms have gone away.
- The spread of bird flu is not limited to any one geographic area, nor is it linked to a particular ethnic group.
- Any individual, regardless of their cultural identity or background can get the flu. As with other types of influenza, bird flu is more serious among the very young and older people.

Treatment

- There is no proven treatment for bird flu in people, and there is a very high rate of death from this disease.
- The few who have survived this disease became very ill and required intensive critical care in the hospital.
- In some cases, doctors may consider using antiviral drugs to treat bird flu, but none of the drugs currently available are proven to be effective.
- There currently is no vaccine to protect humans against the bird flu virus that is being seen in Asia. However, vaccine development efforts are underway.