

Avian Flu

Avian flu, also known as bird flu, is a respiratory disease that can infect humans as well as birds. It is caused by a flu-like virus.

Avian flu is transmitted to humans in Southeast Asian countries from bird dropping or by eating inadequately cooked poultry.

Avian flu is very contagious among birds and can be deadly to both birds and humans.

Can Avian Flu infect humans?

Yes, avian flu viruses do not usually infect humans, but several cases of human infection with avian flu viruses have occurred since 1997.

How do humans get Avian Flu?

Humans can get avian flu from contact with infected birds or contaminated surfaces. Infected birds shed the virus in saliva and droppings. A person can catch the avian flu virus when an infected chicken coughs or sneezes onto his/her face, or by breathing in bird dropping particles.

The World Health Organization is still investigating whether avian flu spreads from human-to-human.

The virus is not passed through eating cooked meat or eggs, so there is no danger in eating fully cooked chicken or duck.

What are the symptoms of Avian Flu in humans?

- * The time period between exposure to symptoms may be up to 10 days.
- * Flu-like symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches
- * Shortness of breath
- * Eye infections
- * Severe cases of avian flu can cause serious breathing problems including pneumonia and can cause death.

What treatment is available for Avian Flu?

Health care providers will tell patients how to treat, depending on their symptoms. Depending on the severity of the symptoms, treatment may include hospitalization, supportive care and/or the use of anti-virals. There is an antiviral drug that can be used for the prevention and treatment of Avian Flu.

Is there a vaccine that can protect me from Avian Flu?

No, a vaccine that protects from avian flu is not

available at this time. Providers may choose to give regular flu vaccine to high-risk groups such as poultry workers, to reduce the risk that they may become infected with both the human and avian viruses at the same time.

Why is there a concern about getting both viruses at the same time?

The mixing of human and avian viruses could produce a new kind of flu to which humans have no protection. It is also possible that the new type of flu would be easily passed from person-to-person, which could cause widespread outbreak (pandemic) and even death.

Protect Yourself

Even though there is no conclusive evidence that avian flu is transmitted person-to-person, health officials recommend people take the same precautions to protect themselves against avian flu as they would colds and other flu.

Wash your hands frequently and stay away from people who are coughing, have a fever greater than 100°, have other flu-like symptoms and have recently traveled to an Asian country.

Contra Costa Health Emergency Information line:

Avian Flu Information
1-888-959-9911

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