

What is avian flu?

Avian flu, or "bird flu" is caused by a flu virus that occurs naturally in birds. Wild birds can carry the virus and may not get sick from it; however, birds such as chickens, ducks and turkeys can get the virus and die from it.

The virus could spread worldwide because birds fly from one place to another.



How do birds spread the disease?

Domestic birds may become infected with the avian flu virus through direct contact with infected birds or through contact with surfaces (such as dirt or cages) or materials (such as water or feed) that have been contaminated with the virus. People, vehicles, and other objects such as cages can spread the flu virus from one farm to another. When this happens, avian influenza outbreaks can occur among poultry.

Is avian flu a threat to humans?

The first human case of avian flu was discovered in 1997, and, since then, approximately 175 people have become infected with the disease.

Most cases of avian flu in humans are thought to have resulted from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces.



Most human cases have occurred in rural areas where many households keep small poultry flocks, which often roam freely, sometimes entering homes or sharing outdoor areas where children play. Exposure to the flu virus mainly occurs during slaughter, defeathering, butchering and preparation of poultry for cooking.

What are the symptoms of avian flu?

Symptoms of avian flu in humans include typical flu-like symptoms - fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches. Other symptoms may be eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory disease and other severe and

life threatening complications. The most common symptoms include fever greater than 38C or 100.4F and a dry cough and sore throat.

Is a vaccine available to treat avian flu?

Currently no vaccine has been approved that will keep a person from catching the avian flu.

However, health care professionals are working to come up with a vaccine that will prevent the avian flu in humans.



Although a yearly routine flu shot will not prevent you from catching the avian flu, you should get a flu shot each year, as it will help prevent the seasonal flu from becoming the avian flu.

How can you protect yourself from catching the avian flu?

- Stay away from chickens, ducks or other poultry and their waste
- Teach children to stay away from birds
- Don't keep birds as pets
- Wash hands with soap and water after any contact with birds
- Do not prepare poultry from affected areas
- If you come into contact with poultry from an infected 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 seven days
- Call your health care provider if your temperature is above 37.5C or 99.5F.

What is pandemic flu?

Pandemic flu is a human flu that causes people all over the world to become seriously ill. Because there is little natural immunity, the disease can spread easily from person to person. Currently, there is no pandemic flu.

How is pandemic flu different than seasonal flu?

The seasonal flu is caused by a flu virus that is already present in the human population. A pandemic flu will be caused by a flu virus that is not currently present among people. Seasonal flu occurs at about the same time every year, beginning in December and ending in March. Most people who get seasonal flu recover within a week or two and do not require medical treatment.

The very young, the very old and the very sick are most likely to become seriously ill from seasonal flu.

Pandemic flu is more serious than a "typical" flu. It is caused by a new flu strain that humans have not been exposed

to, so they have no natural resistance or immunity to it. Pandemic flu is different from seasonal flu because it infects large numbers of people of different ages all over the world and causes serious illness and deaths. During a pandemic, people are more likely to get the flu and it is more likely to be deadly, even among young and healthy people.

What are the symptoms of pandemic flu?

The symptoms of pandemic flu will likely be similar to the seasonal flu. Symptoms may be high temperature, muscle aches and pains, extreme tiredness, cough, sore throat and stuffy or runny nose.



Avian (Bird) Flu



Protect Yourself and Your Family