



Avian Influenza – “Bird Flu”

Avian influenza is called “bird flu,” because it naturally occurs in birds. Viruses that cause this do not usually infect humans and other animals, but sporadic human infections with avian influenza have occurred. Outbreaks of “bird flu” could lead to widespread infection in humans.

Signs & Symptoms

The viruses usually cause no or only mild symptoms in wild birds. Certain strains of “bird flu” can cause widespread disease and death in some kinds of wild birds, chickens, and turkeys.

Symptoms in Humans

- Fever.
- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Muscle aches.
- Eye infections.
- Pneumonia. Severe problems breathing.
- Other serious problems that can threaten life.

Causes

Avian influenza A viruses cause “bird flu.” Infected birds shed the virus in saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Contact with infected birds or contaminated surfaces can spread the virus to humans. “Bird flu” viruses may be able to change and infect humans directly. This means that the virus could easily pass from one human to another. If this happens, an “influenza pandemic” could occur.

Treatment

When outbreaks occur, sick and exposed animals are killed. This keeps the virus from spreading. Persons who test positive for or might have “bird flu” are isolated. Certain antiviral medicines are given. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) track and address outbreaks.

Questions to Ask

Do you have symptoms of “bird flu” listed on this page and have you gone to a place with an outbreak of “bird flu” or been in close contact with someone who has?



Self-Care / Prevention

- Check the Web sites listed below for current facts and possible vaccines for “bird flu” viruses. Avoid direct or close contact with wild birds and infected domestic birds and their droppings.
- Take antiviral medicines, as prescribed.
- Eat properly cooked poultry.



Get up-to-date information on “Bird Flu” from:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
800.CDC.INFO (232.4636)

www.cdc.gov/flu (Search for “avian influenza”)

World Health Organization (WHO)

www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en