

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) & Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Virus

### What is Avian Influenza (bird flu)?

Avian Influenza, also known as bird flu, is a term for flu viruses that affect birds. Usually, Avian influenza viruses are influenza A viruses. Avian (bird) Influenza (flu) viruses are very easily spread among birds. Domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks and turkeys, can get sick and die from bird flu. Infections with Avian Influenza viruses can occur in humans.

### What is Avian Influenza A (H5N1)?

Influenza A (H5N1) is an Avian Influenza A virus sub-type that occurs mainly in birds, can be highly contagious and deadly among birds. It has been reported in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Near East. Influenza A (H5N1) virus does not usually infect people, but infections from H5N1 have occurred in humans.

### How does Avian Influenza A (H5N1) infect humans?

Infected birds can spread Influenza A (H5N1) virus through saliva, nasal secretions and feces. Most cases of Avian Influenza A (H5N1) in humans resulted from close or direct contact with H5N1 infected poultry (domestic chickens, ducks and turkeys) or H5N1 on surfaces.

### What are the symptoms of Avian Influenza in humans?

In humans, symptoms range from typical flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches) to eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory distress and other life threatening complications. Symptoms of Avian Influenza depend on the type of virus causing the illness.

### Is there any treatment for Avian Influenza A (H5N1) in humans?

Any vaccine treatment that can be used will depend on which type of Avian Influenza virus is identified and how soon the vaccine can be developed and manufactured. Currently, there is no treatment for all Avian Influenza infections.

### How can Avian Influenza A (H5N1) be prevented?

- Good hand washing can help prevent the spread of influenza.
- Studies suggest that anti-viral drugs approved for human flu viruses would work in preventing bird flu infection in humans. However, some flu viruses can become resistant to anti-viral drugs so these medications may not always work.
- Currently, there is no vaccine to protect humans from bird flu although vaccine development is under way.
- Before traveling outside the country, check for travel advisories at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).



OVER

# HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
  - backs of hands
  - wrists
  - between fingers
  - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

**For more information on Avian Influenza, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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