

Avian Flu General Precautions

Avian flu is a viral disease and it can be very contagious and even deadly in poultry (e.g., chickens, turkeys, ducks). Of great concern are the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) viruses (e.g., H5N1, H7N9) that have killed millions of birds and infected humans in other countries. If avian flu viruses are detected in the U.S. or if you have travel assignments in countries that have avian flu outbreaks, take appropriate precautions.

Avian Flu Symptoms in Humans

Range from fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches to nausea, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, eye infections, difficulty breathing, pneumonia and severe respiratory disease. Symptoms may depend on which virus caused the infection but are often similar to those of human seasonal influenza.

How Humans Are Infected

- Contact with sick poultry or surfaces soiled with discharge from their mouths or beaks, or with feces.
- Inhaling contaminated particles from poultry.

Treatment

Some prescription antiviral drugs may be effective.

General Precautions

- Wash hands thoroughly (for at least 15 seconds) and frequently, preferably with soap and water (or an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60 percent alcohol, if soap and water are not available).
- Avoid contact with possibly infected poultry.

Precautions When Exposed

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE):
 - Disposable gloves or gloves that can be disinfected;
 - Protective clothing (long-sleeved coveralls with a waterproof apron);
 - Disposable shoe covers or footwear that can be disinfected;
 - Safety goggles; and
 - Wear at least the minimum level of respiratory protection, an N95 or higher respirator.
- Employees should remove all PPE at work to avoid taking contaminated items home. Wash hands after removal of gloves and other PPE.

Additional Guidance

- Get the seasonal flu vaccine.
- If you develop flu-like symptoms, stay at home except to get medical attention.



U.S. Department of Labor



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