



AVIAN INFLUENZA

What is AVIAN INFLUENZA?

Avian Influenza (bird flu) is an infection caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) viruses. These flu viruses occur naturally among birds. Wild birds worldwide carry the virus in their intestines, but usually do not get sick from them. However, bird flu is very contagious among birds and sometimes can make chickens, ducks, and turkeys very sick and kill them.

Transmission:

The risk of bird flu in humans is very low, but several cases of human infection have occurred since 1997. Most human cases of bird flu infection have resulted from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces. Rarely, bird flu can acquire the ability to be spread directly from person-to-person which can lead to a flu pandemic (worldwide epidemic).

Signs and Symptoms:

Symptoms of bird flu are similar to flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches). Other symptoms that have been reported include eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory distress, and other life-threatening complications.

Treatment:

Prescription medicines approved for human flu viruses should work, but the flu virus could become resistant and not work. There is no vaccine currently available.

Diagnosis:

A laboratory test is needed to detect avian flu in humans.

What can you do?

Avoid contact with infected birds and animals or any surface contaminated with bird feces. Wash your hands immediately if you do come in contact with infected animals or contaminated surfaces. Children need to wash their hands after playing in areas where they or their shoes may have come in contact with bird feces. Separate raw meat, and anything it touches, from cooked or ready-to-eat foods to avoid contamination. Cook all meat thoroughly.

Whom do you call?

Division of Public Health: 1-888-295-5156

For more information:

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/.