

AVIAN INFLUENZA

WHAT IS AVIAN (BIRD) INFLUENZA (FLU)?

Avian Influenza occurs naturally in birds. Wild birds carry the viruses in their intestines, but usually do not get sick from them. Bird flu is highly contagious in birds and can make domesticated birds like chickens, ducks and turkeys very sick and kill them.

SYMPTOMS IN HUMANS

Typical flu symptoms (fever, headache, muscle aches, cough, sore throat)

Eye infections

Pneumonia

Acute respiratory distress

HOW DOES BIRD FLU SPREAD?

Infected birds shed the virus and susceptible birds become infected. It is believed that most cases of bird flu infections in humans have resulted from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces.

HOW IS BIRD FLU TREATED IN HUMANS?

The same anti-viral medications that work with human flu can work for bird flu. However, flu viruses can become resistant to these drugs, so these medications do not always work. Check with your physician about specific treatment.

IS THERE A BIRD FLU VACCINE?

An experimental H5N1 vaccine has been made, however, it is not on the market to be used as of yet.

WHAT IS THE RISK TO PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES FROM THE H5N1 BIRD FLU OUTBREAK IN ASIA?

The current risk to Americans is low. The H5N1 virus has not been found in the United States. There have been no human cases of H5N1 flu in the United States. It is possible for travelers to countries in Asia to become infected. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that travelers to countries in Asia with known outbreaks of H5N1 influenza avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surface that appears to be contaminated with poultry or animal feces.

DO BIRD FLU VIRUSES INFECT HUMANS?

Bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, but several cases of human infection with bird flu viruses have occurred since 1997. Avian Influenza A (H5N1) virus is the subtype that has infected humans in Asia. As of October 10, 2005, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 117 confirmed cases of H5N1 bird flu in humans. Sixty of those people have died. Most of these cases occurred from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces; however, it is thought that a few cases of human to human spread of H5N1 may have occurred.

WHAT IS AN AVIAN INFLUENZA A (H5N1) VIRUS?

Influenza A (H5N1) virus is an influenza A virus subtype that occurs mainly in birds. Outbreaks of influenza H5N1 have occurred in poultry in Asian countries. Human infections of influenza H5N1 have been reported in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia. So far, the spread of H5N1 virus from person to person has been rare; although it is thought that a few cases of human to human spread of H5N1 have occurred. However, all influenza viruses have the ability to change and scientists are concerned that it could one day spread from person to person easily. Because humans do not normally get H5N1 influenza, they would have very little or no protection against it. If the H5N1 virus were able to infect people and spread easily from person to person, a pandemic could occur. No one can predict when and if a pandemic will occur, but experts from around the world are watching the situation in Asia closely and are preparing for the possibilities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Denton County Health Department
<http://dentoncounty.com/heart>

Texas Department of Health
<http://www.tdh.state.tx.us>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov>