



BIRD FLU – GET THE FACTS!

Many birds around the world are getting sick from H5N1 avian influenza. This is known as "bird flu". Experts think the bird flu will come to the United States, maybe even this year. However, it is not in the United States now.

If it does arrive here, you should know:

Bird flu is NOT the same thing as "pandemic flu." Pandemic flu would make lots of people sick all over the world, because it would spread easily from one person to another. Bird flu does NOT do that. There is not an influenza pandemic in the world at this time.

H5N1 avian influenza is almost exclusively a disease of birds. The H5N1 virus has not yet appeared in the U.S. Bird flu would have to change its form to become a pandemic flu. We don't know if this will ever happen. Should the H5N1 virus appear in the U.S., it does not mean the start of a pandemic.

Bird flu is hard for people to catch.

Most people who became sick with bird flu in other countries came into contact with infected chickens or ducks that were touched with bare hands. People can also get bird flu by touching things with droppings from infected, sick or dead birds. Poultry meat that has been cooked all the way through cannot give you bird flu.

How do you protect yourself and your family from influenza?

Most influenza viruses that infect people are spread by airborne droplets that reach the eyes, nose or mouth. The virus can also be spread by touching contaminated surfaces and then by touching one's face.

Steps to protect yourself and your family include:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a waste basket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Stay at home if you are sick.
- Protect yourself from influenza each year by getting the "flu shot".
- Keep a supply of food on hand in case you have to stay home. Also, speak with your doctor about having plenty of your medicine on hand.

Checklists for businesses, schools, health care providers, community organizations as well as an individual and family planning guide are available at www.pandemicflu.gov.

*For further information contact Oklahoma City - County Health Department,
Epidemiology Services (405) 425-4437*