



Avian Influenza Frequently Asked Questions

Information is current as of December 2024 and is subject to change.

What is avian influenza?

- Avian influenza is a disease caused by influenza viruses that are typically found in birds.
- Avian influenza viruses normally live in wild waterfowl, like ducks and geese.
- Domesticated birds (chickens, turkeys, ducks, etc.) may become infected with avian influenza.
- Avian influenza can also infect other animals, including wild and domestic animals like seals, foxes, cats, and cattle.
- It is possible for humans to be infected, but this is very rare.

Can I become infected with avian influenza?

- Humans can become infected with avian influenza, but this is very rare.
- The risk is highest for people who work with infected animals or unpasteurized (raw) milk.
- Person-to-person spread of avian influenza is very rare.
- Most people become infected when they have direct contact with infected animals, their wastes, their saliva, or raw milk.

How does avian influenza spread?

- Infected birds shed the virus in their saliva, mucus, and feces.
- People can get avian influenza by:
 - Touching bedding, feed, or water contaminated with waste from infected animals, then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.
 - Breathing in the virus in contaminated respiratory droplets or dust.
 - Working with or drinking unpasteurized (raw) milk.

What are symptoms of avian influenza in people?

- Symptoms of avian influenza are similar to other respiratory illnesses:
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Sneezing
 - Shortness of breath
 - Eye irritation
 - Diarrhea
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Rash
 - Headaches

What should I do if I think I have avian influenza?

- Contact your healthcare provider if:
 - you have any of the symptoms above **and**
 - recent contact with infected birds or animals or unpasteurized (raw) milk
- **Make sure to mention your recent exposure.**
- The only way to tell if you have avian influenza is by taking a flu test.

Is there treatment for avian influenza?

- Yes. US CDC recommends that any person with avian influenza start antiviral treatment as soon as possible.

Where can I find more information?

- Maine CDC Disease Reporting and Consultation: 1-800-821-5821
- Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry:
https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ahw/animal_health/index.shtml#hpa
- US CDC Avian Influenza: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu>