

HEALTH ADVISORY

Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

Look for these symptoms (Similar to any flu):

- High fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}/101^{\circ}\text{F}$)
- Sore throat and runny nose
- Difficulty in breathing (dyspnea)
- Cough
- Lethargy/Myalgia
- Headache
- Redness of eye
- Diarrhea (*common in children*)

KEY FACTS:

- Avian influenza viruses occur naturally among wild aquatic birds worldwide and can infect domestic poultry and other bird and animal species. Infection of poultry with Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) A viruses may cause no disease or mild illness and may only trigger for ruffled feathers and a drop-in egg production and may not be detected. Infection of poultry with High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) viruses can cause severe disease (affects multiple internal organs) with high mortality up to 90% to 100%, often within 48 hours. Both HPAI and LPAI viruses can spread rapidly through flocks of poultry. However, some ducks can be infected without any signs of illness.
- Normally, bird flu does not infect humans, but occasional cases have been reported. When that happens, the disease can cause severe disease. Spread from person to person is unusual. So far (May 2019), one case of bird flu in humans has been reported in Nepal.
- In case of avian flu in poultry, often culling of the sick and possibly exposed birds is needed. Cullers must wear full-body Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before undertaking actions. Burial and disposal in a permitted landfill are the most preferred methods of disposing the culled birds and its products as it helps to minimize negative environmental impact while also mitigating the virus spread. **Under no circumstances should culled birds be touched or used for food.**
- Direct contact with infected poultry, poultry products, or with surfaces and objects contaminated by their droppings are the main route of transmission to human.
- Exposure risk is considered highest when there is contact with infected bird droppings in the environment, especially during slaughter, de-feathering, butchering and preparation of poultry for cooking.
- Seasonal influenza vaccination does not appear to protect against avian influenza.
- All persons exposed to infected poultry or to farms under suspicion including clusters of influenza or influenza-like illness should be under close monitoring by local health authorities.
- It is safe to eat poultry and its products (e.g. eggs), provided they are well-cooked.

	Do's	What you should avoid
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice general hygiene: Wash hands frequently. Take due care of personal hygiene. Maintain cleanliness of surrounding • Use of personal protective measures while handling domestic poultry and other bird species • Travelers should contact their local health providers for supplementary information • Travelers returning from affected regions should report to local health services if respiratory symptoms suspecting Avian Influenza • Handle raw poultry hygienically and cook all poultry and poultry products (including eggs) thoroughly before eating • People with direct contact with ill poultry should be watched to see if they become ill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid contact with domestic birds (poultry) that appear ill or have died • Avoid contact with high-risk environments such as live animal markets and poultry farms, any free-ranging or caged poultry • Avoid contact with surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from wild or domestic birds • Avoid preparing or eating raw or undercooked poultry products • Avoid consumption of undercooked eggs, poultry or poultry products • Do not take medicine without doctor's prescription
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately visit a doctor and seek for medical attention if you have the above symptoms or have been exposed to individuals with above symptoms or severe unexplained respiratory illness • Immediate treatment with appropriate antiviral medications can help reduce the severity of disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't wait for symptoms to worsen before approaching a doctor/health facility.

About Influenza Vaccine:

- Seasonal influenza vaccination does not appear to protect against avian influenza. Candidate vaccines to prevent H5N1 infection have been developed; however, they are not ready for widespread use.

About Antiviral Medication:

- In case antiviral medication is recommended by the attending clinician, please contact Dr Rajan Bikram Rayamajhi, WHO Health Emergencies Programme, (email: rayamajhir@who.int ; Mobile: 9801010039) for its availability after furnishing the medical documents as per the norms of Ministry of Health and Population.