

Health Information for People in Contact with Birds That May Have Avian Influenza

What is avian influenza? Avian influenza is also known as bird flu, which can be a very contagious, and even deadly, viral disease in poultry (e.g., chickens).

What do I need to know about bird flu in humans in the United States?

- Recently, poultry in Tennessee and Alabama have tested positive with avian influenza.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) think there is a low risk to the public's health from the recent bird flu positive test results in Tennessee and Alabama.
- No human infections associated with the Tennessee or Alabama bird illness have been reported.
- Human infections with bird flu are rare. There have been occasional human infections in the past, usually after exposure to infected poultry.
- Symptoms of bird flu infections are generally mild illness such as pink eye, nasal congestion, runny nose, sneezing, sore or scratchy throat, or cough.
- People in contact with infected birds need to be monitored.
- People could get bird flu after contact with sick poultry or surfaces soiled with discharge from sick poultry or with poultry feces or breathing in contaminated particles from the poultry.

I work in a poultry house or around chickens. What do I need to know? People in contact with known infected or possibly infected birds/poultry or contaminated surfaces should take precautions to protect against infection.

Precautions include:

- Limit contact with the infected birds.
- Use employer/company approved personal protective equipment (PPE) when working with birds. This includes birds that have tested positive and negative.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth while working with birds.
- At the end of work each day, remove your PPE, and wash hands thoroughly for 15-20 seconds with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer until you are able to wash hands.

What is "contact" with sick birds? Contact with sick birds includes:

- Checking feeders and waterers in barns with sick birds
- Testing/Preparing for depopulation: crowding birds, moving equipment
- Picking up dead birds
- Helping with examination of dead birds (necropsy)

If I have been contact with sick birds, what do I need to do?

ADPH requests you monitor your health daily for 10 days after the last exposure to a sick bird, contaminated surface, or positive birds. If you become symptomatic with flu-like illness, including cough, fever, sore throat or runny nose, please contact your doctor and call ADPH, Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks Division, at 1-800-338-8374 for possible testing. ADPH staff may contact you to discuss self-monitoring.

Is there anything else I can do to protect my health?

Influenza activity has been widespread throughout Alabama this season. ADPH recommends everyone get an annual flu shot to reduce your chance of getting human flu. While the flu shot will not prevent infection with bird flu, it reduces the serious health consequences that can occur if you become simultaneously infected with both human flu and bird flu. Additional flu prevention measures include wash your hands, cover your cough, clean and sterilize surfaces, and stay home if you are ill.

adph.org/epi