



# EMERGENCY

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT  
**PANDEMIC AND  
AVIAN FLU**

LEARN HOW TO  
SAFEGUARD YOUR HEALTH

[www.milwaukee.gov/health](http://www.milwaukee.gov/health)

# PANDEMIC FLU AND YOU

## WHAT IS PANDEMIC FLU?

Pandemic flu refers to a worldwide disease outbreak of flu. Since 1900, there have been three documented flu pandemics. The most well-known and deadliest flu pandemic, the “Spanish Flu,” took place between September 1918 and April 1919, killing an estimated 50-100 million people worldwide.

A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu virus emerges for which people have little or no resistance. Because this flu virus has not been seen previously, an effective vaccine will most likely not be available for the general public for up to 8 months from when the pandemic begins. A pandemic flu virus will spread easily from person to person, resulting in large numbers of people becoming ill. Depending on the seriousness of the person’s illness, pandemic flu can result in death.

## WHAT IS AVIAN (BIRD) FLU?

Usually avian or “bird” flu refers to flu viruses that are found primarily in birds, but from time to time can be passed from birds to humans. For most people, the risk of becoming ill from avian or “bird” flu is generally low.

### Is Avian (Bird) Flu the same thing as Pandemic flu?

Not currently, but the avian or “bird” flu virus might change, making it easily passed from one person to another. If that happens, it may cause a pandemic. Avian flu is just one of many types of flu that may cause a future pandemic. Any flu virus for which people have little or no immunity and which is easily spread from person to person may cause a pandemic.



The current avian or “bird” flu being tracked globally by the City of Milwaukee Health Department and other state, federal and international health officials is an infection caused by the H5N1 virus. This virus occurs naturally among wild birds, which may not show visible signs of illness. Domestic birds such as chickens, ducks and turkeys can get this virus from wild birds or other domestic birds, resulting in widespread illness and death in domestic birds.

## TRANSMISSION

Can the current H5N1 avian flu cause illness in humans?

Yes. There have been more than 275 confirmed human cases of H5N1 avian flu reported in 12 separate countries throughout the world since 2003.

How do people get H5N1 avian flu?

So far, almost every case of H5N1 avian influenza infection in humans has been linked to direct close contact with infected domestic birds.

## Can people become infected with H5N1 avian flu by eating chickens, ducks, and turkeys?

There is no evidence that properly cooked chickens, ducks, turkeys or eggs are sources of avian flu infection. Cooking poultry until it reaches an internal temperature of 165°F or higher will kill harmful bacteria and viruses associated with human illness.

## Can a person infected with H5N1 avian flu pass the illness to other people?

In rare instances, H5N1 avian flu has been passed from person to person. In these rare instances, the persons were family members, and had frequent and close contact with each other.

## HEALTH RISKS

### What are the symptoms of the H5N1 avian flu in humans?

Symptoms range from typical flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches) to eye infections, pneumonia and severe breathing issues.

### How does someone know if they have been infected with H5N1 avian flu?

A laboratory test is needed to confirm the presence of H5N1 avian flu.

Persons with symptoms consistent with avian flu infection and who have traveled to a country in which H5N1 avian flu outbreaks have occurred in birds or humans within 10 days of feeling ill, should seek care from their medical provider and contact the City of Milwaukee Health Department at 414-286-3624.

## PREVENTION

### Is a vaccine available to prevent the H5N1 avian flu?

Yes, currently there is a limited supply of vaccine stockpiled by the federal government that has been specifically developed for the current H5N1 avian flu virus, and is intended for first responders and healthcare workers. The federal government continues to work with vaccine manufacturing companies exploring new ways to shorten the time it takes to produce flu vaccine as well as to increase the amount of vaccine that can be produced at one time. Currently vaccine manufacturers are limited in the amount of vaccine they can produce, and it requires up to 6 months for flu vaccine to be produced.

### Will a seasonal flu shot protect me from the H5N1 avian flu?

No. While the seasonal flu shot will not protect you from H5N1 avian flu, it will protect you from becoming ill and spreading disease within the community during the regular flu season.

### What can I do to prevent illness related to H5N1 avian, pandemic or seasonal flu?

Prevent illness by making good hygiene a habit.

- Get a flu shot each year.
- Get a pandemic or H5N1 flu shot when available and directed to do so by your local public health department.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and hot water. Hand washing is one of the easiest ways to prevent the spread of disease.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw used tissue into a wastebasket.
- Wash or sanitize your hands after coughing or sneezing.



## PREPARATION

### What else can I do to prepare for pandemic flu?

The City of Milwaukee Health Department encourages everyone to have an emergency preparedness plan and an emergency kit for your household. A plan and kit will support your family not only during a pandemic, but also during other emergencies that may occur within our community. Additional information on preparedness plans and emergency kits is available at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or [www.americanredcross.org](http://www.americanredcross.org)

### Where can I get further information on pandemic flu?

For more information, please call or visit:

City of Milwaukee Health Department

414-286-3606 or [www.milwaukee.gov/pandemicflu](http://www.milwaukee.gov/pandemicflu)

US Department of Health and Human Services

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) or 1-800-CDC-INFO

#### References:

US Department of Health and Human Services.

Retrieved July 10, 2006, from [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)



Tom Barrett, Mayor  
Bevan K. Baker,  
Commissioner of Health

[www.milwaukee.gov/health](http://www.milwaukee.gov/health)

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