



Get Ready: Pandemic Flu Facts

What is pandemic flu?

A pandemic of influenza, or flu, occurs when a new type of flu virus that is easily transmitted from person to person that our bodies aren't protected against spreads rapidly around the world. Because our bodies haven't come across this flu virus before, those people who get this new flu virus are likely to become much sicker from it than the normal seasonal flu, and can possibly die.

How is pandemic flu different from the seasonal flu we see every year?

In cases of seasonal or annual flu, unlike pandemic flu, our bodies have some protection against the types of flu that go around each year. This is because our bodies have been exposed to these common flu strains before and have had time to develop some protection against them. This protection is also improved by the flu shots we get every year to keep us from getting sick.

But that doesn't mean that the annual flu is not a serious health threat. Each year, more than 200,000 people in the U.S. have to go to the hospital because of the flu, and 36,000 people die from it.

However, a pandemic flu outbreak could send millions to the hospital and kill hundreds of thousands, as our bodies have not had the time to develop protection against it. Because it takes over 6 months to make a new flu shot, there would be no flu shot right away to protect us from this new type of flu virus.

The annual flu is also more likely during cold weather; people typically get it October to May. However, pandemic flu can happen at any time of year and often comes in two to three waves over a couple of years.

What is avian flu?

Avian flu is a type of flu that birds get, which is why it's also called "bird flu." While some birds are only carriers, this flu can cause wild birds, chickens and other domestic birds to become sick, with some of them dying as a result.

What does H5N1 mean?

H5N1 is the scientific term for the bird flu virus that is currently infecting wild birds, poultry and other animals around the world. When a new flu virus is discovered, it is named using an "H" and "N"—abbreviations for the two proteins (hemagglutinin and neuraminidase) that make up a flu virus. Some combinations of "H" and "N" cause serious illness and likely death, while others cause only very mild symptoms in animals and in people. Flu viruses that begin with H5 or H7 are known to be those that are likely to make birds and people pretty sick.

What's the difference between avian and pandemic flu?

The term "pandemic" refers to a disease being spread globally, transferred from person to person. Pandemic flu occurs when a flu virus spreads around the world. Pandemic flu itself is not a type of flu virus. Avian flu is a type of flu virus that originates in birds. At this point, avian flu is not currently causing a pandemic of flu in people. There is a type of avian flu (H5N1 bird flu) causing a pandemic in birds and poultry in other countries.

Can people catch avian/bird flu?

Yes. However, at this time, most people who have been infected with this type of flu had very close contact with sick birds, including working with them on farms and living with them in the same house. Currently, a person CANNOT catch this type of flu easily from another person. If the flu changes so people can get it easily from another person that could lead to a pandemic.

How can I reduce my risk of getting seasonal flu, bird flu or pandemic flu?

The best way to protect yourself from the common flu that goes around each year is to get a flu shot. However, there is currently no flu shot for avian or pandemic flu. By following these simple steps, you can reduce your risk of getting the flu, regardless of whether it's avian, pandemic or seasonal:

- Wash your hands often, long enough and with warm water and soap. Wash your hands for as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" all the way through twice (about 20 seconds).
- Stay home from work or school when you are sick. As you can infect others early on, you should stay home as soon as you come down with any flu-like symptom.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze and cough.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick from a respiratory illness. If you have a respiratory illness, keep this in mind to protect the people you live and work with from getting sick.

Does the flu shot I get every year protect me from pandemic and bird flu?

No; it does not. The vaccine only protects you against the types of flu that have been spread in the U.S. and around the world before and have gotten people sick.

Is there a flu shot for bird flu?

Not yet. A vaccine for this type of bird flu is being developed, but is not available for you to get at this time. Once it is available, it is expected to be in short supply for several months. It takes several months to make flu vaccines for each type of flu.

Is there a medicine to make me feel better if I get bird flu?

Bird flu is currently not in the United States. However, if infected birds are found here, or if people start to catch this flu from other people, there will be some medicine, but it will be in short supply. This medicine is called antiviral medication, which won't make you feel better right away, but will shorten the amount of time you are sick. However, antiviral medications don't work for everyone, and may not work against new kinds of flu viruses.

Why should I be worried about bird flu? Why is it receiving so much attention on TV, on the Internet, in newspapers and on the radio?

First, birds around the world are becoming sick and dying, which has affected people who depend on raising chickens and other birds for their livelihoods. The avian flu that we are seeing today has also infected a small number of people that are in close contact with birds. Recently, people who were in close, long-term contact with a family member who was sick with avian flu became sick themselves. However, at this point, people can't catch this flu (the

H5N1 flu) easily from another person. If this changes, a lot of people will likely become sick and maybe die from this type of flu. Remember, the flu vaccine that people get every year does not keep people from getting avian flu.

Should I take this seriously?

Yes. Although avian flu has not been reported in the United States, and no immediate threat of a pandemic exists, you should still be planning ahead so you and your family are prepared. There have been three flu pandemics in the last 100 years. Preparing for pandemic flu is very similar to planning for a disaster such as a hurricane, tornado or other disaster. You should ask yourself questions including:

- What should you do if your children’s school or childcare center closes because of an emergency condition?
- What would you do if grocery stores and pharmacies closed? Do you have enough food and water at home? What about your medications?
- If a flu pandemic or disaster strikes, how will you care for family members at home, including those with serious or long-term illnesses?
- Would you be able to use sick leave or work from home if there were an emergency?
- Does your workplace have a plan for how to respond if a flu pandemic or other disaster strikes and do you know what that plan is?

If bird flu comes into this country, how will I know if family members, friends or I am sick?

The people that have become sick so far from avian flu, mostly in Asia, have started with similar symptoms to the flu that we see every year, but generally more severe. These include muscle aches, fever, cough and sore throat.

What about my pet? Can pets, such as dogs, cats or birds, get avian flu?

Yes. However, there is no risk to pets in the United States as this time, as H5N1 avian flu has not been seen here yet. When it does appear, you should seek the advice of public health and wildlife authorities about appropriate protections to take.

What should I do if I find dead wild birds in a nearby park, or if birds in my yard become sick and die?

Please call your local United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services office at 1-866-4-USDA-WS. Do not touch the birds unless you have to. If you have to touch them, use strong, waterproof gloves and wash your hands and arms afterwards. Remember dead birds can be from other causes, not just avian flu.

Is it safe to eat chicken and eggs?

Yes. You cannot catch avian/bird flu if your food is cooked at a high enough temperature. Avian flu is not spread through properly cooked food. To make sure your chicken is cooked all the way through, use a meat thermometer. The inside of your chicken should be at a temperature of at least 165 °F throughout. Never eat raw eggs or food with raw egg ingredients, such as cookie dough or cake batter. Be sure to thoroughly cook all dishes with raw eggs in them before eating them.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States Department of Agriculture and World Health Organization.

For more information, please contact your local health department (phone number listing next page) or the Oklahoma State Department of Health at 405-271-4060.

COUNTY	NUMBER
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COUNTY	NUMBER
Adair	918-696-7292
Atoka	580-889-2116
Beaver	580-625-3693
Beckham - Elk City	580-225-1173
Beckham - Sayre	580-928-5551
Blaine	580-623-7977
Bryan	580-924-4285
Caddo	405-247-2507
Canadian - El Reno	405-262-0042
Canadian - Yukon	405-354-4872
Carter - Ardmore	580-223-9705
Carter - Healdton	580-229-1291
Cherokee	918-456-8826
Choctaw	580-326-8821
Cleveland - Moore	405-794-1591
Cleveland - Norman	405-321-4048
Coal	580-927-2367
Comanche	580-2485890
Cotton	580-875-6121
Craig	918-256-7531
Creek - Bristow	918-367-3341
Creek - Drumright	918-352-9581
Creek - Sapulpa	918-224-5531
Custer - Clinton	580-323-2100
Custer - Weatherford	580-772-6417
Delaware	918-253-4511
Garfield	580-233-0650
Garvin - Lindsay	405-756-2928
Garvin - Pauls Valley	405-238-7346
Grady	405-224-2022
Grant	580-395-2906
Greer	580-782-5531
Harmon	580-688-3348
Haskell	918-967-3304
Hughes	405-379-3313
Jackson	580-482-7308
Jefferson	580-228-2313
Johnston	580-371-2470
Kay - Blackwell	580-363-5520
Kay - Ponca City	580-762-1641
Kingfisher	405-375-3008
Kiowa	580-726-3316
Latimer	918-465-5673
LeFlore - Poteau	918-647-8601

COUNTY	NUMBER
LeFlore - Talihina	918-567-2141
Lincoln	405-258-2640
Logan	405-282-3485
Love	580-276-2531
Major	580-227-3362
Marshall	580-795-3705
Mayes	918-825-4224
McClain - Blanchard	405-485-3319
McClain - Purcell	405-527-6541
McCurtain	580-286-6620
McIntosh - Checotah	918-473-5416
McIntosh - Eufaula	918-689-7774
Murray	580-622-3716
Muskogee	918-683-0321
Noble	580-336-2257
Okfuskee	918-623-1800
Oklahoma	405-427-8651
Okmulgee - Beggs	918-267-3606
Okmulgee - Henryetta	918-652-8250
Okmulgee - Okmulgee	918-756-1883
Ottawa	918-540-2481
Pawnee - Cleveland	918-358-2546
Pawnee - Pawnee	918-762-3643
Payne - Cushing	918-225-3377
Payne - Stillwater	405-372-8200
Pittsburg	918-423-1267
Pontotoc	580-332-2011
Pottawatomie	405-273-2157
Pushmataha - Antlers	580-298-6624
Pushmataha - Clayton	918-569-7973
Rogers	918-341-3166
Seminole - Seminole	405-382-4369
Seminole - Wewoka	405-257-5401
Sequoyah	918-775-6201
Stephens	580-252-0270
Texas	580-921-2029
Tillman	580-335-2163
Tulsa	918-582-9355
Wagoner - Coweta	918-486-2845
Wagoner - Wagoner	918-485-3022
Washington	918-335-3005
Woods	580-327-3192
Woodward	580-256-6416