

How does bird flu spread?

Birds that have bird flu can spread the virus through their saliva, the mucus from their nose and their droppings. Other birds or animals can get sick if they come into contact with these fluids or with surfaces that have been touched by infected birds.

People who catch bird flu often get it through close, prolonged and unprotected contact—no gloves, protective wear, face masks, respirators or eye protection—with infected birds, dairy cattle or other animals.

These viruses could spread from animals to people in several ways:

- If you touch or consume an infected bird or animal, its droppings or its byproducts (eggs, milk, etc.)
- If you touch a surface contaminated with the virus and touch your eyes, nose or mouth
- If a liquid containing the virus splashes into your eyes, nose or mouth (for example, raw cow's milk from an infected cow during milking)
- If you or inhale or consume droplets contaminated with the live virus



Who's at risk?

People exposed to birds or mammals and their bodily fluids, droppings or feathers are at greatest risk of becoming infected. People at high risk include:



- **Poultry Workers:** This includes farmers, workers in poultry processing plants and anyone who works in close contact with chickens, turkeys or other poultry. This risk is significantly higher if the farm has experienced an outbreak of bird flu among animals, has undertaken culling because of bird flu or if there have been human cases of bird flu associated with the farm.
- **Dairy Workers:** Individuals working on dairy farms, especially those with close contact with cows and their milk, are at increased risk, particularly if the farm has experienced an outbreak of bird flu among cows or if there have been human cases of bird flu associated with the farm.
- **Wildlife Workers:** This includes wildlife rehabilitators, wildlife biologists, veterinarians, and others who work closely with wild birds.
- **Hunters:** Hunters who may come into contact with sick or dead birds during hunting activities.
- **People with small backyard flocks:** Owners of backyard chickens, ducks or other small poultry flocks may be at increased risk if their birds come into contact with wild birds or contaminated materials.

What you need to know about Bird Flu

if you handle birds or cows



What is bird flu?

Bird flu is infecting poultry, dairy cows and people around the U.S.

Bird flu, also called avian influenza, is an infection from a type of flu virus that mainly affects birds. Usually, it stays within bird populations. However, in recent years, we have seen a worrying trend. Bird flu is now infecting other animals more often, such as dairy cows and even humans. This is concerning because humans don't have immunity against this type of flu so it can be severe and spread quickly.

People who have contact with wild birds, poultry or cattle can also catch bird flu from these animals.

People rarely get bird flu, but it can spread to humans when enough of the virus gets into a person's eyes, nose or mouth. This means that people who work closely with wild birds, poultry or dairy cows are more at risk for getting sick from bird flu.



People at higher risk for bird flu include:

- Poultry workers
- Dairy workers
- Wildlife workers
- Hunters
- People with small backyard flocks

Symptoms in people with bird flu can range from minor cold and flu symptoms to more severe illness resulting in hospitalization or death.

What should I do to protect myself?

If you work with cows or birds, if you have birds at your house or if you go hunting, you need to protect yourself.

- **Wear protective clothing and a mask** when you are near these animals, including when you are near their feathers, fur, poop, eggs, milk or anything that might have these on it.

At the very least, you should wear:

- A good mask (N95s, KN95s or KF94s)
- Safety glasses or goggles

For even better protection, wear:

- Disposable gloves or work gloves that can be disinfected
- Disposable outer garments with long sleeves

If you have them, wear:

- Disposable shoe covers or boots that can be disinfected
- Disposable head coverings

- **Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water** or an alcohol-based hand rub after contact with these animals.
- **Avoid touching your bare skin with the outside of a used glove.** Germs can be present on the glove's surface.
- **Drink only pasteurized milk** that has been treated to kill harmful bacteria and viruses.
- **Cook poultry, meat and eggs to the right internal temperature** to kill germs.
- **Get a seasonal flu vaccine.** Seasonal flu vaccine will not prevent bird flu. But it can reduce the risk of getting infected with both seasonal flu and bird flu at the same time, which could lead to a more severe illness.

How do I know if I have bird flu?

Symptoms of bird flu can include the following. It is possible to have just one symptom – or none at all.

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| • Pink eye (conjunctivitis) | • Sore throat |
| • Stuffy/runny nose | • Cough |
| • Fever | • Fatigue |
| • Shortness of breath | • Muscle aches |
| | • Vomiting and Diarrhea |

If you think you may have been exposed to bird flu, you should carefully monitor yourself for any signs of these symptoms for the next 10 days.

What should I do if I think I might have bird flu?

If you develop any of these symptoms and have had a potential exposure, isolate yourself and wear a mask to protect others. Contact a local clinic as soon as possible and let them know that you may have been exposed to bird flu and are ill. Only a lab test can determine if you have bird flu.

Be sure to tell them if you have recently been around animals or if you have had contact with animal products on a farm.

