

# Emerging Infectious Diseases in 5

## Bird Flu (Avian Influenza)

### facts for the public

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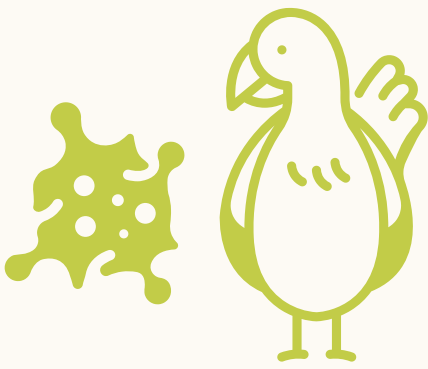
### 1. What is it?

Avian Influenza (Bird flu) is a type of flu usually caused by viruses that circulate in birds. These viruses are generally Type A influenza viruses, and they are a public health threat because they mutate rapidly, and there is concern that they may evolve to better infect humans (highly pathogenic avian influenza) leading to epidemics. There are many subtypes of Influenza Type A that have originated in poultry or other birds including A(H1N1) A(H3N2), and A(H5N6). For example, A(H5N6) was first detected in humans in 2014 and in 2021, there have been 25 reported human infections of this subtype (as of October 29, 2021).



### 2. How does it spread?

Bird flu viruses can spread to humans that come into contact with an infected bird's feces, saliva, or mucous, or a contaminated environment by breathing in droplets or dust that contain the virus. Depending on the subtype, there are sometimes sporadic cases of spread from person to person. Symptoms can include cough, fever, sore throat, shortness of breath, and muscle aches.



### 3. How is it treated?

Current antiviral treatments such as neuraminidase inhibitors like oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and the polymerase acidic protein inhibitor baloxavir can be used for treating some of the subtypes. In addition, there is potential to produce vaccinations to target specific subtypes. Lastly, scientists are working to discover "universal flu" vaccines which could address all subtypes.



### 4. How do we prevent its spread?

Avoid sources of exposure including infected or sick wild birds and poultry, or contaminated environments. Wear personal protective equipment like facemask and eye protection when working in contaminated environments or caring for someone who is sick. Public health experts also recommend preserving wetlands where wildfowl inhabit and avoiding placing farms too close to these habitats, which would create conditions that allow wild birds to come into contact with humans and domestic poultry.



### 5. Where is it found?

Bird flu viruses have originated in many countries. For example, H5N6 has been detected in China and Lao PDR, H5N1 has been detected in over 50 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and H7N7 has been detected in the Netherlands.



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#### Sources

CDC: [www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/2021-2022/H5N6.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/2021-2022/H5N6.htm) | [www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/influenza-a-virus-subtypes.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/influenza-a-virus-subtypes.htm) | [www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h5n1-virus.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h5n1-virus.htm) | [www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-flu-summary.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-flu-summary.htm)

WHO: [www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/influenza-\(seasonal\)](http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/influenza-(seasonal)) | [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/influenza-\(avian-and-other-zoonotic\)](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/influenza-(avian-and-other-zoonotic))

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