



General Authority for Health Services for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi

Al-Rahba Hospital

AVIAN INFLUENZA (BIRD FLU)

➤ **What is avian influenza (bird flu)?**

Bird flu is an infection caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) viruses. These flu viruses occur naturally among birds. However, bird flu is very contagious among birds and can make some domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, very sick and kill them.

➤ **What is an avian influenza A (H5N1) virus?**

Influenza A (H5N1) virus – also called “H5N1 virus” – is an influenza A virus subtype that occurs mainly in birds. Like all bird flu viruses, H5N1 virus circulates among birds worldwide, is very contagious among birds, and can be deadly.

➤ **What are the symptoms of bird flu in humans?**

Symptoms of bird flu in humans have ranged from typical flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches) to eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory diseases (such as acute respiratory distress), and other severe and life-threatening complications.

➤ **How does bird flu spread?**

Infected birds shed flu virus in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Susceptible birds become infected when they have contact with contaminated excretions or surfaces that are contaminated with excretions. It is believed that most cases of bird flu infection in humans have resulted from contact with infected poultry.

➤ **How is infection with H5N1 virus in humans treated?**

The H5N1 virus currently infecting birds in Asia that has caused human illness and death is resistant to amantadine and rimantadine, two antiviral medications commonly used for influenza. Two other antiviral medications, oseltamavir and zanamavir, would probably work to treat flu caused by the H5N1 virus, but additional studies still need to be done to prove their effectiveness.

➤ **Is there a vaccine to protect humans from H5N1 virus?**

Vaccine development efforts are taking place

Prevention of Avian Flu

- Droppings of infected birds and poultry may carry the avian flu virus, so avoid touching live birds or poultry or their droppings.
- If you have been in contact with live birds or poultry, immediately wash your hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water.
- Cook poultry and eggs thoroughly before eating.
- The best protection against influenza is having good body resistance. This can be achieved through a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest, reducing stress, and not smoking.
- Avoid crowded places with poor ventilation.
- If you develop fever and respiratory symptoms after returning from a country that reports an avian flu outbreak, consult your doctor and tell him/her about your travel history.