

Bird Flu



Infection Control

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Bird Flu Infection Control

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How to Survive a Bird Flu Pandemic

The best way for you and your family to survive a pandemic is to try to avoid contact with the bird flu virus. So find out all you can about how the virus is transmitted, what protective gear you need to have on hand, and what infection control procedures you should know.

Bird Flu Transmission

Viruses are usually passed from person to person in three ways:

Airborne Droplets

Viruses can be spread through the air, when people cough, sneeze and talk. These droplets are large particles and do not stay in the air for long. They usually fall within one meter of their source and require close proximity for a virus to be transmitted person to person.



If you are caring for someone that is sick, or if you are infected with the bird flu virus and someone is looking after you, wear a **disposable mask or respirator** over your mouth and nose, to cut down the chance of contact with the bird flu virus.

Stay away from mass gatherings, such as movies, concerts, church services, schools and try to work from home if possible. If you must go out, only go if you are not sick, and whenever you are close to other people, wear a mask and disposable gloves, if possible.

Direct Contact

Transmission can also occur by direct contact, through touch, from person to person. During a bird flu pandemic, widespread social practices such as shaking hands, hugging and kissing should be suspended until the danger of becoming infected with the virus is over.

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Indirect Contact

When the bird flu virus is transmitted by indirect contact, persons who touch the same surface or share food and drink become infected.

Supermarkets, for instance, will be a prime spot to pick up the virus, since there is a very good chance that infected persons will touch the doors, merchandise and the shopping trolleys. Automatic tellers and money will be another obvious source of infection, as will the doors and taps in rest rooms, just to name a few.

If you go out during a pandemic, always wear protective [disposable gloves and a mask](#). Try to travel at off-peak hours, when the least people will be in shops and using public transport.

Human Bird Flu Symptoms

Symptoms of bird flu are much like typical flu symptoms, and can include a cough, sore throat, fever, muscle aches and fatigue. However, symptoms can vary according to viral subtype and strain.

Infection with the bird flu virus can also lead to pneumonia and other severe respiratory diseases, such as acute respiratory distress syndrome, and various life-threatening complications. However, treatment in the early stages of infection can lessen the effects of these complications.



Avian Flu Symptoms

If you have poultry of your own, it will be useful to be able to identify birds that may be exhibiting bird flu symptoms. Several strains of avian influenza viruses occur naturally in populations of wild birds and usually cause only mild symptoms, but when domesticated birds become infected, they can become very sick and usually die.

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Look for ruffled feathers, green diarrhoea, a pinkish discharge from the nostrils, lack of coordination, inability to walk, fly or stand, purple-blue coloured wattles and comb, trouble breathing, and swelling of eyelids, comb and wattles.

In domesticated chickens, avian flu symptoms also include: a loss of appetite, soft-shelled eggs, and a drop in egg production. Be sure to report any suspected sightings of sick or dead birds to the health authority in your area.

How to Avoid the Bird Flu Virus

Bird Flu Infection Control at Home

One of the best and easiest ways to prevent the spread of any virus among family members is to provide good hand-washing facilities with warm, running water (best if the water can be turned on and off using your elbow).

Use a liquid soap dispenser, since the use of bar soap by several members of a family can help spread an infection.

Also provide disposable towels for use when turning the water on and off, and for drying their hands. Make sure each family member uses these disposable towels, as cloth towels can harbour and transmit the virus, if used more than once by persons that are infected.

Wash your hands regularly with soap, lathering vigorously for at least 20 seconds. Viruses can live up to 48 hours on the surfaces of door-knobs, steering wheels, books, computer keyboards, toys, and so on.

It takes 2-4 days for symptoms of bird flu to appear after a person has been infected with the virus.

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If you are coughing and sneezing, wear a disposable mask. If masks aren't available, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, be sure to discard the tissue after use, then wash your hands.

If you are sick with the flu, wear a mask when others are in your room - this is a must to prevent the spread of the virus.

Don't touch your nose or eyes, put your fingers in your mouth, or kiss anyone on the mouth. Wash your hands well after using the toilet and after coming in contact with any body fluids.

Clean toilet seats and floors often, wearing gloves, using warm water and detergent, followed by a wash with a good disinfectant solution, that will deactivate the virus. Dry with disposable paper towels.

Wash contaminated laundry in hot water with detergent and hang your clothes in the sun. Handle your clean laundry with clean hands.

Make sure that cooking and eating utensils are washed in hot soapy water and rinsed with boiling water to kill any virus. Keep a sick person's dishes separate. Wash food well and cook food thoroughly.

Keep cooking area clean with household detergent, then sanitize with bleach, alcohol or disinfectant.

Remove your shoes before entering the house, particularly if you have chickens or ducks that free-range around your property.

Handwashing Tips

Thorough handwashing is probably the most important strategy in the prevention of infection with the bird flu virus.

As mentioned before, you will need soft soap in dispensers, warm running water, disposable paper towels, and a container for waste disposal.



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When to wash your hands

- Immediately upon arriving home after shopping, visiting neighbours, work, school, the post office, the doctor's office and so on.
- After touching contaminated surfaces, such as door handles, steering wheels, pets, books, the mail, the ATM machine, money, and after contact with persons possibly infected with the virus.
- Before preparing food, before eating or feeding others, before and after going to the toilet, before and after cleaning the house, and after changing bed linen.
- Wash your hands well after any contact with body fluids or excretions, and whenever your hands feel dirty or are visibly soiled. Use a hand sanitizer if soap and running water aren't available.
- And be sure to wash your hands after wearing disposable gloves.

A good handwashing routine

- Remove all jewellery from your hands and wrists. Don't wear rings or bracelets when caring for sick people, or when you are sick yourself, as these items are difficult to clean thoroughly.
- Use a disposable towel to turn water on. Wet your hands thoroughly under warm running water.
- Dispense 3–5 ml (1/2 teaspoon) of liquid soap into your palm.
- Rub palms, backs of hands, between each finger, and around wrists and thumb in a vigorous and systematic manner for 20–30 seconds.
- Use a nail brush to clean under your fingernails.
- Rinse your hands thoroughly under warm running water. Pat your hands dry on clean disposable paper towels.

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Handcare

- Keep your fingernails short and clean – use a nail brush often. Don't use nail polish, as peeling polish harbours microorganisms.
- Cover cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing and change the dressings often.
- Use a pH neutral soap to protect your skin from drying out and unscented moisturizer to maintain your skin.

Caring for a Bird Flu Patient

When caring for someone infected with the virus, try to follow these infection control practices, which will help you avoid becoming sick as well.

- Always wear a well-fitting mask or respirator, an apron or gown, disposable covers for your shoes and hair, and disposable gloves.



All will protect your clothing and body from contamination with body fluids that may contain the virus, and any airborne microorganisms. Wash your hands well before putting on your protective clothing.

- Have the sick person wear a mask or respirator while you are in the room, especially if that person is coughing and sneezing.
- Keep the dishes that the sick person uses separate, and wash them in a special plastic basin, with hot water and detergent.
- Keep all items that the person uses (clothes, dishes, towels, sheets, books, soap, toothbrush, etc) in the room until the person recovers.
- Wipe the surfaces of the sickroom clean with warm water and detergent, followed by a disinfectant solution to deactivate the virus.

[Click here for disinfectants](#)

- Put all laundry from the sickroom into a special bin outside the door, and wash as soon as possible.
- When contact with the sick person is finished, remove your protective clothing outside the door of the sickroom, and put it directly into the special container for sickroom laundry.
- Remove your gloves carefully, pulling them down from the wrist, so that they are turned inside out and discard them immediately in a special container. Wash your hands thoroughly afterward.
- Finally, remove your mask and dispose in the same container for contaminated waste, and be sure to empty the container in an area away from animals and humans.

Cleaning Contaminated Areas

The following advice will help you avoid infection, when cleaning up spills of body fluids in the sickroom:

- Wear an apron, disposable shoe covers, a disposable mask or respirator, and disposable gloves. (See protective clothing.)
- Wash hands thoroughly before putting on your protective clothing.
- Wipe up spill as much as possible with disposable towels and dispose of these towels in a plastic bag. Tie the top of the bag and place the bag in a rubbish bin especially for contaminated materials.
- Change your gloves, washing your hands thoroughly.
- Mop the area thoroughly with household detergent and warm water. If the spill is extensive, change the water several times.
- Then wash the area well with with a disinfectant solution of 1% sodium hypochlorite (bleach) diluted 1:5 in clean water, or with 70% alcohol or a commercial disinfectant. Both of these solutions will inactivate the virus. Make sure the work area is well-ventilated.

[Click here for disinfectants](#)

- Discard the contents of the bucket into the toilet and disinfect the mop and bucket with the one of the above solutions.
- Dry the area thoroughly with disposable towels, and discard in the container for contaminated waste.
- Use a separate mop for cleaning the sickroom and other contaminated areas and keep it and the bucket in the sickroom.
- For carpeted areas, clean with carpet shampoo and disinfectant. Remove and replace carpet if necessary.
- Dispose of carpet away from exposure to children and animals.
- Remove apron or gown when finished and place in container reserved for contaminated laundry.
- Remove gloves and wash in warm water and detergent (if using utility gloves). Remove mask and discard.
- Wash your hands well after removing your protective clothing.

Stock up on Cleaning Equipment

- Buy plenty of disposable paper towels, liquid soap and dispensers
- Purchase a good hand sanitizer, for disinfecting your hands when you are unable to use soap and water.
- Disposable paper towels, disposable gloves, disinfectants, and a separate mop and bucket for the sickroom will be necessary for cleaning up all areas of your home, but especially useful when dealing with spills of contaminated body fluids.
- Use special containers for storing contaminated laundry and waste. A big stock of plastic bags and some covered bins will be useful.

[**Click here for protective gear**](#)

Managing Contaminated Laundry

When handling contaminated laundry, be sure to wear a mask, disposable gloves, shoe covers and an apron. Also:

- Store virus-contaminated laundry separately. Don't carry contaminated laundry from one part of the house to another.
- Take the special container to the sick-room, before you remove the sheets and pillowcases from the bed.
- As you remove each sheet, hold it away from your body and place it directly into the container. Do not place soiled laundry on the floor.
- Handle contaminated laundry as little as possible. Don't sort soiled linen in an uncontaminated area and never throw soiled linen down a laundry chute.
- Set the water temperature on your washing machine to reach 80°C and use a good detergent.
- Don't overfill the washing machine and be sure to wash contaminated laundry separate from other laundry.
- Remove your protective apron and add to it to the washing.
- Discard your disposable mask first, then gloves, then wash your hands well.
- Hang the laundry in sunlight for as long as possible. Handle clean laundry with clean hands.

Note: Risk of infection with the bird flu virus will be reduced if sheets, pillowcases, towels, face cloths, masks, gloves, and similar items are not shared between family members.



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Infection Control while Travelling

If you must go to work, visit the doctor or go shopping you will have to take measures to avoid making contact with the virus:

- Keep away from persons who are coughing and sneezing; avoid shaking hands and kissing; don't stand close to people when talking.
- Wear disposable gloves or protect your hands with a paper towel when opening doors or turning on water to wash your hands in rest rooms.
- Travel during off-peak hours. If you must travel in crowded situations, wear a disposable mask or respirator, for protection against any airbourne virus released when people cough and sneeze.
- Don't attend mass gatherings such as movies and concerts, and avoid crowded venues such as shopping malls, buses, trains, planes, elevators, supermarkets, schools, banks, and the post office.



Infection Control at Work

Arrange with your employer to work from home, if your work situation permits. But if you must go to work:

- Bring your own coffee cup, food and dishes and eat in. Keep workplace areas clean - wash with detergent, then sanitize with bleach, alcohol or a commercial disinfectant.
- Cover your hands with a disposable paper towel to open the toilet door, and to turn on water to wash your hands. Wash your hands often, using a good handwashing routine or hand sanitizer.
- Wear a disposable mask or respirator to avoid contact with airborne viruses, especially if workmates are coughing and sneezing.

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- Be sure to wear disposable gloves when using shared equipment.
- Encourage your employer to assemble a survival kit containing plenty of masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and paper cups.

Infection Control while Shopping

- **Avoid** eating in restaurants and **don't** buy takeaway foods.
- When out in public, be sure to wear a mask or respirator.
- Wear disposable gloves when handling equipment that other people use, such as shopping trolleys and credit card/debit card devices. These will be carriers of the bird flu virus during a pandemic.
- Do not share drink containers, cups or glasses, plates or cutlery. If food is shared, divide the food into separate containers.
- If gloves aren't available, a good way to avoid contact with the virus is to use a disposable towel to cover your hands when opening doors, especially to and from toilets.

Protective Equipment

Bird Flu Masks

A disposable mask (also sometimes called a respirator or surgical mask) provides protection by acting as a barrier between airborne viruses and your nose and mouth.



These should be FFP3 standard, for the highest level of protection against viruses in the air. A good mask or respirator gives 99% particle filtration efficiency and can be either reusable or disposable.

A surgical mask should be worn when there is the likelihood of

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airborne infection occurring, as from an infected person coughing and sneezing on buses, trains, in stores, waiting rooms, and elevators.

Wearing a bird flu mask will also reduce your chances of spreading the bird flu virus, if you are infected.

Types of Bird Flu Masks

Some disposable masks are reusable and can be adjusted to seal against your face securely. Several have been especially designed to be worn with eyewear.

Others have replaceable, disposable filters that are designed to remove and destroy virtually all viruses and bacteria present in the air that is breathed in and out through the mask.



These masks can filter out particles three times smaller than the bird flu virus, so are very effective when worn properly.

Stocks of masks could run out during a bird flu pandemic, so you should seriously consider acquiring a supply that would last several months. Several types are available from pharmacies, medical suppliers and many sources on the Internet, but make sure that you buy them from a reputable vendor.

So have a look at what's available and consult with your family doctor to find out which will best protect you from the bird flu virus.

Important Facts about Disposable Masks

The directions provided by the manufacturer of your bird flu mask or respirator must be strictly followed.

If it does not make a tight seal on your face, because it is the wrong size, or because you have sideburns or a beard, contaminated air could leak around the edges of the mask.

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Make sure that your mask is designed to be worn with glasses, if you wear them. The supplier of your protective equipment will provide information on how to wear your bird flu mask correctly.

Once your mask has been worn and has been contaminated:

- Don't touch the front with your hands
- Don't leave it dangling around your neck. Remove the mask by the ear loops or the band that runs around the back of your head.
- Hold it away from you, and drop it into a container reserved for contaminated materials.
- If you don't have a such a container, drop the mask into a plastic bag, tie the top and discard the bag.

Bird Flu Respirators

Respirators and masks are both designed to remove particles from the air, but some are more complicated.

Since bird flu respirators are designed to filter out airborne viruses, you should have a good supply of these to wear whenever you have to be around people who might be infected.



Types of Respirators

Particulate respirators are designed to filter out contaminants in the air, including particles and infectious microorganisms, such as the bird flu virus. These are simple face masks and the least expensive and are sometimes called bird flu respirators. These are designed only to prevent inhalation of particles and will not protect the wearer against noxious gases in the air.

[Click here for bird flu respirators](#)

Chemical cartridge respirators (gas masks) are used to filter chemical gases and some particles out of the air. This mask comes with a filter contained in a metal cartridge and, as you breathe, the air passes through the filter and is purified. To be effective, gas masks must be used with the appropriate filter.

You can also purchase respirators that have their own air supply, either remote or self-contained. However, the particulate respirators are the respirators that would be used by most people for protection against the bird flu virus during a pandemic.

Important Facts about Respirators

The directions provided with your respirator must be strictly followed. As with the masks, if it does not make a tight seal on your face, you could breathe contaminated air that leaks around the edges of the respirator. Make sure your respirator is designed to be worn with glasses, if you wear them.

Once you have worn your respirator and it is likely to be contaminated, do not touch the mask area with your hands. Remove the respirator by its strap, hold it away from you, and drop it into a container for contaminated materials.

Who may have problems wearing a mask or respirator?

Respirators and masks are unlikely to fit small children. Also, elderly people and those with lung conditions (asthma, emphysema, pneumonia, bronchitis) are likely to find it difficult to breathe, since the air must be drawn in through a filter.

You can purchase bird flu respirators from companies advertising on the Internet, medical suppliers and pharmacies.

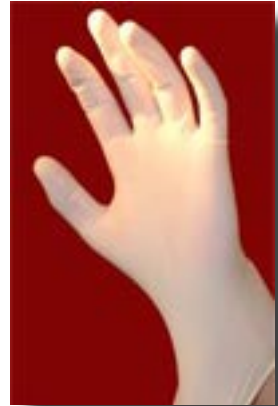
Have a look to see what's available, then consult with your family doctor to find out which one will provide you with the best protection.

[Click here for masks + respirators](#)

Disposable Gloves

Disposable gloves (also known as surgical gloves) are designed to help you avoid contact with harmful microorganisms.

If a pandemic occurs, wear disposable gloves whenever you care for people who are infected with the bird flu virus, and whenever you must have contact with surfaces may have been touched by people infected with the virus.



Why wear disposable gloves?

1. Wearing gloves protects you from direct contact with surfaces/ equipment (ATM machines, door handles, steering wheels, and so on) that may be contaminated with the bird flu virus,
2. Disposable gloves reduce the chances of spreading the virus to others, since they are discarded after use (make sure to have a special container for disposal of contaminated gloves and masks), and
3. Disposable gloves, when worn by a carer, will protect a sick or disabled person from any microorganisms that might be present on the carer's hands. These gloves must be discarded in a special container at the door of the sickroom, when leaving the area.

Precautions when wearing surgical gloves

Wearing gloves is not a substitute for washing your hands. You must wash your hands thoroughly before and after wearing gloves.

The best way to remove your gloves is by peeling the glove off from the wrist downward, so that the contaminated area of the glove (the outside) is contained within the inside-out glove. Then immediately put the gloves into a special container for contaminated materials. If a container is not available, put the gloves into a plastic bag, tie the top of the bag and discard.

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Important: Change your gloves if they become torn or punctured. Disposable gloves should not be washed or disinfected. Utility gloves used for cleaning can be washed in detergent, dried, stored, and reused. Blue vinyl gloves, if available, should be worn when handling, preparing and serving food.

Suppliers of Bird Flu Gloves

You can buy surgical gloves from pharmacies, medical suppliers and many sources on the Internet. Many supermarkets also stock boxes of disposable gloves (50 per box). During a pandemic, supplies of bird flu gloves may run low, so keep a supply of them on hand.

Bird Flu Survival Kit

The form of the virus that causes a pandemic may not be as lethal as expected. However planning what to do and getting together a survival kit is a sensible idea, as the items will help reduce the chances of a viral infection if a pandemic does occur.



Your basic bird flu survival kit should contain the following:

Masks and respirators should be FFP3 standard, to give the highest level of protection against bird flu viruses in the air. A good respirator gives 99% particle filtration efficiency and can be either reusable or disposable.

Masks, respirators and disposable gloves are probably the most important protective items in your bird flu survival kit.

Shoe covers, goggles and disposable aprons (or gowns) are also important, since wearing them reduces the risk of contact with the virus – especially if you are caring for a sick person, cleaning the sickroom area, and washing contaminated laundry.

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Bird Flu Treatments

Obtain antiviral drugs, if they are available, and some natural or over-counter flu remedies, which may ease some of the symptoms of bird flu. Be sure to ask about possible side effects.



If you can afford it, buy a ventilator and ask your doctor about appropriate inhalants, for relief from breathing complications and coughing.

Practice good health habits - exercise daily and eat a balanced diet.

Arrange for your annual influenza and pneumonia vaccinations. These may strengthen your immune system and make it easier to fight off infection by a bird flu virus.

You will also need to stockpile food, water, your usual prescription medicines, a radio and batteries, and ways of providing heat during winter, and light at night.

Important:

Most of these survival kit items can be obtained from pharmacies, medical suppliers and many sources on the Internet. However, if you decide to purchase protective equipment from a website, make sure that you are dealing with a reputable licensed supplier.

Stay informed about measures that are being taken to deal with a possible pandemic, and be prepared to respond if a pandemic occurs.

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