

What is avian influenza (bird flu)?

Avian influenza, also called bird flu, is caused by a virus that infects birds such as chickens, turkeys, geese, pigeons, and pheasants. The virus is found in an infected bird's poop as well as fluids from the bird's eyes, nose, or mouth.



Bird flu doesn't usually infect people, however, there are a few ways you can get infected. A person can be infected with bird flu if they

- Touch their eyes, nose or mouth after working with infected live or dead birds.
- Touch their eyes, nose, or mouth after visiting places where infected birds have lived.
- Breathe in droplets or dust contaminated with the virus.
- Have close contact with a person already sick with the disease, though this is rare.

Symptoms of bird flu range from mild eye infections to a flu-like illness. In severe cases, bird flu can cause pneumonia and death.

Who can get bird flu?

Most humans are unlikely to get bird flu. Individuals who work with animals, such as veterinarians, farmers, animal industry experts, and wildlife professionals, or people who visit poultry farms or live-animal markets may be more likely to get infected.

What can people do to prevent bird flu?

There is no vaccine to prevent bird flu, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

- Avoid touching birds and visiting places where birds live
- Do not touch birds whether they are alive or dead.
- Avoid visiting live bird and poultry markets.

Avoid Germs

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water aren't available, clean hands with hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. If you need to touch your face, make sure your hands are clean.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Try to avoid close contact, such as kissing, hugging or sharing eating utensils or cups with people who are sick.

If you feel sick and think you may have bird flu, particularly if you have a fever, talk to a healthcare provider and tell them about any contact with birds. Stay away from other people while you are sick.

Preparing food

The Georgia poultry industry maintains rigorous health and safety standards, including routine monitoring for avian influenza. **It is safe to eat properly handled and cooked poultry; there is no concern of avian influenza risk in processed poultry products.**

Always properly handle and cook poultry products:

1. **Clean:** Wash hands and surfaces often.
2. **Separate:** Separate raw meats and poultry from other foods.
3. **Cook:** Cook all poultry to 165°F.
4. **Chill:** Refrigerate promptly.

For more information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/prevention.htm>