



## Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

### What is avian influenza (bird flu)?

Avian influenza is an infection caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) viruses. These flu viruses occur naturally among birds. Wild birds carry these viruses, but usually don't become sick. Domesticated birds like chickens, ducks and turkeys that get bird flu get very sick and usually die from the illness. The viruses that cause avian influenza may also be transferred to other animals such as pigs. Avian influenza may be referred to as Influenza A (H5N1) virus.

### How is it spread?

Infected birds spread the virus in their saliva, nasal secretions and feces. Other birds become infected when they have contact with these substances. Avian influenza usually does not affect humans; however human cases have occurred since 1997. It is believed that the human cases resulted from contact with infected poultry or other animals or contaminated surfaces.

### What are the symptoms?

Avian influenza symptoms include:

- fever
- cough
- muscle aches
- sore throat
- eye infections
- pneumonia
- severe respiratory diseases
- other severe and life-threatening complications

Symptoms can vary based on which virus caused the infection.

### How is it diagnosed?

Avian influenza should be diagnosed by a health care provider using a blood test.

### How is it treated?

A health care provider may prescribe an antiviral medication although some viruses are resistant.

### How is it prevented?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water during food preparation and after contact with birds and animals.
- Clean and sanitize food preparation and cooking surfaces and utensils.
- Cook all food (especially poultry) thoroughly.

### What should you do if you believe your family or pets are at risk?

Encourage family members to follow the prevention tips. Report any change in your pet's or livestock's behavior to a veterinarian.

For more information, call the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (336) 641-7777 or visit our website at [www.myguilford.com](http://www.myguilford.com) or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)