



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Information for people who are identified as contacts of a confirmed case of avian (bird) influenza A (H7N9)

03/03/2017

Version 5.0

You have been identified as a contact of a confirmed case of avian (bird) influenza A (H7N9) infection.

What is avian influenza A (H7N9) infection?

Avian influenza viruses are normally found in birds. Human infections with bird flu viruses are rare, but have happened in the past, usually after close contact with infected birds (both live and dead) or environments contaminated with bird flu virus. Although some avian H7 viruses (H7N2, H7N3 and H7N7) have occasionally infected humans, no human infections with H7N9 viruses were reported until reports from China in March 2013. To date, only three cases have been reported outside of China, two in Taiwan and one in Malaysia in travellers from China.

What are the symptoms of avian influenza A (H7N9) infection?

So far, most patients with this infection have had severe pneumonia. Common symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. We know of only a small number of people who presented with influenza-like symptoms and then recovered without medical attention.

What is the risk of getting avian influenza A (H7N9) infection?

The risk of getting avian influenza A (H7N9) is low as to date almost all of the cases have occurred in China. Available information suggests that most people have been infected with avian influenza A (H7N9) after having contact with infected poultry. It is not easily spread from person to person.

Who is a contact?

A contact is someone who was within 6 feet (2 metres) or within the room or care areas of a person with confirmed avian influenza A (H7N9) for a prolonged period of time, or who had direct contact with infectious secretions from the patient (such as being in the direct path of a sneeze) while the person was likely to be infectious (beginning 1 day before symptoms started and continuing until the person got better). We are still learning about avian influenza A (H7N9) and how it spreads.

Who is NOT a contact?

Casual contact with the ill person for example, if you passed them in the corridor at work or waved to them etc. does not require any further action.

What happens now that I have been identified as a contact?

A Public Health Doctor or Nurse will contact you and ask you a number of questions about your health and give the following advice.

- Take medicine to prevent avian (bird) flu
You may be offered a course of Tamiflu (an anti-viral medicine) depending on the amount of contact you had with the case. The doctor will decide this after talking to you.
 - Household and close family contacts will be offered Tamiflu
 - If you are a healthcare worker who looked after the patient, the doctor will discuss the amount and type of contact you had and may decide to offer you Tamiflu-this will be discussed in detail with you.

Note: If your contact with the case was short and not in the hospital or home, you probably will not be given Tamiflu, the doctor will decide this after talking to you. Tamiflu is an antiviral medicine used to prevent or treat avian (bird) flu. If you have been infected with the virus, this medicine will prevent you from becoming ill or reduce the severity of the illness. This will be free of charge. Please read the Tamiflu leaflet provided by Public Health which explains this in more detail.

- Check your temperature twice a day and look out for flu like symptoms
 - Fever -when your temperature is 38 °C/100.4 °F or higher
 - Flu-like symptoms (e.g. cough, runny nose, sore throat, aches and pains and shortness of breath).

You will be given a thermometer to check your temperature.

- If you develop any of the symptoms above in the 10 days after your last contact with the person who has confirmed flu
 - Contact Public Health at:
 - Weekends _____
 - Out of hours _____
 - If you are a healthcare worker contact occupational health as per local arrangements at
 - Contact details: _____
 - The doctor/nurse will advise you what to do next
 - You should avoid contact with other people while you have symptoms until you are seen by the doctor
 - You will be given a small supply of masks to wear if you are unwell when seeking medical assistance
 - If you are referred to hospital, inform staff as soon as you arrive that you are a contact of a case of avian influenza A (H7N9).

If you don't develop symptoms a doctor or nurse from the Department of Public Health will contact you 10 days after you last had contact with the case. This is just to make sure that you have continued to be well (that is if you haven't developed fever or cough as above) and that they have all the information they need. If you are well and the last contact you had

with a person who had avian influenza A (H7N9) was more than 10 days ago there is no cause for concern.

- *Get vaccinated against seasonal flu (regular flu vaccine)*

If it is flu season (September to May) and you have not had the flu vaccine, you should get this year's flu vaccine as soon as possible. This will stop you from having human and bird flu at the same time. Having bird and human flu together could lead to changes (mutations) in the bird flu virus making it more infectious to humans. The Public Health doctor will tell you where to get the vaccine. Like Tamiflu, the vaccine will be free.

- *Practice good hygiene to prevent the spread of all respiratory infections*

Viruses that cause respiratory infection are spread from one person to another mainly when the sick person coughs and sneezes. These viruses may also be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with the virus and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Although avian influenza A(H7N9) has not been found to be very infectious up to now, the following precautions will help prevent the spread of respiratory infections

- Cover your mouth and nose with a paper tissue when coughing or sneezing. If no tissue is available you should cough / sneeze into the inside of your elbow.
- Use a tissue only once and dispose of it quickly and carefully (a dustbin is fine).
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol hand rub
- Wash hard surfaces such as kitchen worktops, door handles, etc. with a normal household cleaner as the virus can live on these surfaces.

Should contacts go to work?

If you are a contact (non household) and you don't have symptoms, you should continue to live as normal e.g. go to work, school, shopping, visit relatives, and attend religious services provided you are feeling well.

Any contact who has symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat) is asked to inform public health, and stay at home except to get medical care. The contact should limit contact with other persons until fully recovered.

Household contacts caring for or visiting an ill family member (s) with avian influenza A (H7N9) should not work, should limit contact with other people as much as possible and monitor for signs of illness as outlined above.

A member of my family has an underlying illness, should I move out of my home until the 10 days are up?

No, asymptomatic contacts who are feeling well can live at home.

What are the risks for a contact who is pregnant?

Pregnant women belong to the at-risk group for seasonal influenza (regular influenza). At present, there have been too few cases of avian influenza A (H7N9) to know if there is an increased risk to pregnant women. However, an assessment will be done and Tamiflu provided if the doctor thinks it is needed. Attached is a Frequently Asked Questions Sheet on avian influenza A (H7N9) for your information.