DISEASE RISK

BIRD FLU (AVIAN INFLUENZA)

Public health advice for those going to or returning from

Bird flu-affected areas

Travellers should be aware that cases of a severe form of bird flu are occurring in poultry and wild birds in some parts of the world

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This leaflet provides information on this potentially serious disease and the precautions you should take to help protect yourself.

NHS

BIRD FLU

- Bird flu (or avian influenza) is a type of flu that mainly affects wild and domestic birds

- It can spread rapidly between birds causing sickness and death, especially in poultry farms or live bird markets where birds are kept close together

- Infected birds shed flu virus in their saliva, nasal fluids and droppings, spreading it to their feathers

- A serious form of bird flu (caused by the H5N1 virus) is currently affecting poultry (particularly chickens and ducks and some wild birds) in parts of Asia and Europe (see: www.who.int for list of affected areas).

- In the recent past, the H5N1 virus has spread to humans and caused serious illness in a small number of local people who have had close contact with infected birds. About half of these people have died. No human cases have occurred in the UK.

- So far, there is no confirmed evidence of this virus spreading from one person to another

- Even if you come into close contact with infected birds, dead or alive, the risk of catching bird flu remains extremely low

- There are currently no restrictions on travelling to affected areas

- Travellers should be aware of the risk and follow the advice given in this leaflet

IF YOU ARE TRAVELLING TO AN AFFECTED AREA

If you are visiting countries with reported outbreaks of H5N1 bird flu among poultry, you should observe the following measures:

• do not visit bird or poultry farms or markets

• avoid close contact with live or dead poultry

• do not eat raw or poorly-cooked poultry

• do not eat raw or poorly-cooked poultry products, including blood

• wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

If you have been in contact with live or dead poultry in an affected country be aware of the symptoms of bird flu in humans. They are similar to ordinary flu symptoms and can appear suddenly. They may include:

• a fever (temperature of 38°C or more)

• cough

• shortness of breath

• headache

• sore throat

• sore eyes

• muscle aches.

If you have these symptoms whilst abroad and have been in close contact with live or dead poultry you should seek medical advice locally.

For further travel advice consult the
National Travel Health Network Centre (NaTHNaC)
www.nathnac.org
and the
Foreign and Commonwealth Office website
www.fco.gov.uk

IF YOU ARE RETURNING FROM AN AFFECTED AREA

If you develop the above symptoms within seven days of leaving an affected country and you had close contact with live or dead poultry, it is very important that you:

- seek immediate medical attention

- telephone your doctor or ring NHS Direct on 0845 4647* stating your symptoms and recent travel history

- follow the advice you are given.

Medicines such as aspirin, ibuprofen or paracetamol may help relieve the symptoms. Follow the instructions with the medicine.

Do not give aspirin to children under 16 years of age

As with any respiratory infection, you should follow good hygiene practices by:

- covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing

- using tissues only once when coughing or sneezing and disposing of them promptly and carefully

- washing your hands frequently with soap and water.

Detailed information and advice on bird flu (H5N1) can be found at: www.hpa.org.uk

*Only available when calling from within England and Wales. Calls cost a maximum of 4 pence per minute from a BT landline. The cost of calls from mobiles and other networks may vary. Your service provider may charge a minimum cost per call. For patients' safety, all calls to NHS Direct are recorded.

DH Publication Orderline
Phone 08701 555 455
E-mail dh@prolog.uk.com

This document is also available at www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu

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