

# Bird flu (avian influenza)

Bird flu is a type of flu infection that spreads among birds. It is also known as 'avian influenza' or 'avian flu'.

Cases of bird flu in people are very rare. It does not spread easily to humans. The spread of bird flu from person to person is also very rare.

## How you can get bird flu

You can get bird flu if you are in close contact with a bird that has it.

Close contact includes:

- touching infected birds that are dead or alive
- touching their poo or bedding
- killing or preparing infected poultry for cooking

The main signs that a bird may have bird flu include:

- sudden death
- swollen head
- closed and runny eyes
- loss of appetite
- difficulty breathing
- diarrhoea
- fewer eggs laid or eggs with watery whites

You cannot get bird flu by eating poultry or eggs that are fully cooked, even in an area with an outbreak.

## Reduce your risk of getting bird flu

There are things you can do to prevent bird flu.

## Don't

- ✗ do not go near or touch bird poo, or sick birds or dead birds
- ✗ do not visit live animal markets or poultry farms if you do not need to
- ✗ do not bring live birds, poultry or feathers into the country
- ✗ do not eat poultry that is raw or undercooked
- ✗ do not eat raw eggs

## Do

- ✓ [wash your hands often with warm water and soap](#), especially when handling food and raw poultry
- ✓ use different utensils and surfaces for raw meat and cooked meat
- ✓ make sure meat is cooked until steaming hot
- ✓ avoid contact with live birds and poultry
- ✓ report any sick or dead wild birds

## Symptoms of bird flu in people

The main symptoms of bird flu include:

- a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above
- feeling hot or shivery
- aching muscles
- headache
- a cough or shortness of breath

Other early symptoms may include:

- diarrhoea
- sickness
- stomach pain
- chest pain
- bleeding from the nose and gums

- [conjunctivitis](#)

It takes about 3 to 5 days for the first symptoms of bird flu to appear.

## When to get medical help

### Speak to your GP if:

- you recently travelled to an area affected by bird flu and were within 1 metre of live or dead birds
- you were in close contact with anyone with a severe respiratory illness
- you had contact with anyone who died unexpectedly and was from an area that had an outbreak of bird flu

These tests can be done to confirm bird flu:

- Taking a sample from your throat and nose using a swab, to test for the virus.
- Testing your phlegm for the virus.

If the test results are normal, it is unlikely you have bird flu.

## Treatment for bird flu in people

If you have symptoms of bird flu, you'll be advised to stay at home or be treated in hospital.

You may get antiviral medicine that can help:

- reduce the severity of the condition
- prevent complications
- improve the chances of survival

Antiviral medicines are sometimes given to people who have:

- been in close contact with infected birds
- had contact with infected people, for example family or healthcare staff

Getting treatment quickly may:

- prevent complications, such as [pneumonia](#)
- reduce the risk of developing severe illness

## If you're abroad

Get medical help straight away if you have symptoms of bird flu.

The [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#) lets you get free or reduced cost healthcare when travelling in:

- any European Union (EU) country
- any European Economic Area (EA) country
- Switzerland

[Apply for an EHIC in Ireland](#)

## If you're going abroad

Check health advice for the country you're visiting.

[Travel advice by country - dfa.ie](#)

## Report a suspected case of bird flu in birds

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine watch and control outbreaks of bird flu in Ireland. They keep a list of species they monitor for bird flu.

[List of target species for bird flu surveillance - gov.ie](#)

You can report a sick or dead wild bird:

- by phone
- online

### By phone

Phone: [01 607 2512](#)

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Phone: [01 492 8026](#)

All other times

### Online

You can use an application to report a sick or dead bird. The app will work on any device with a browser and internet connection. You do not have to download the app.

[Avian check wild bird application - gov.ie](#)

[Safety information for the public - gov.ie](#)

## HSE Live - we're here to help

Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 9am to 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

Freephone: [1800 700 700](tel:1800700700)

From outside Ireland: [00 353 1 240 8787](tel:0035312408787)

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