

Avian Influenza (“Bird Flu”)

You have probably heard about avian influenza, or “bird flu,” in the news. Health officials are concerned that if the virus mutates – changes – it could cause a pandemic. A pandemic disease crosses continents and country borders and strains the world’s public health care systems.

Bird flu is a viral disease commonly seen in domestic poultry and wild birds. Currently, there is a dangerous strain of bird flu called “H5N1” this is causing concern for humans. People have no natural immunity to the H5N1 strain of bird flu.

In rare cases, people living in other countries have contracted H5N1 from domestic birds or their droppings. In these isolated cases, the virus has caused sickness and death. So far, there is no evidence that H5N1 has caused disease in people or birds in the U.S.

Occasionally, the virus can be passed from bird to human. Currently the H5N1 bird flu virus cannot easily spread from human to human.

What You Can Do

Practice healthy hygiene and safe food handling.

- Cook poultry at temperatures of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit and eggs until the yolk is solid.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling chicken.
- Avoid touching dead birds. If you need to dispose of a wild bird put it in a plastic bag and then into the garbage. Afterward, wash your hands thoroughly.
- Avoid exposure to bird droppings as a general health precaution.

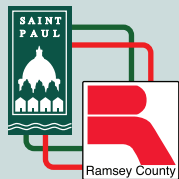


Prepare.

Practice.

Participate.

- Stay aware. Pay attention to news about the bird flu.
- If you're planning on traveling abroad, check health advisories to determine if avian influenza is a concern in the countries you plan to visit at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>.



**Saint Paul – Ramsey County
Department of Public Health**

www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph

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Healthy Habits

Practicing healthy habits is always a good idea. These habits become especially important during public health emergencies such as an influenza (or “flu”) outbreak in your community.

The following steps limit the spread of germs at home, work and school.

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds after using the bathroom, preparing food, eating, coughing, sneezing, nose blowing, taking out the garbage, changing a diaper and caring for the sick.
- Wash hands with soap and water by wetting them, applying soap, making lather and scrubbing, including underneath fingernails. Rinse and dry.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Minimize close contact with sick people.
- When sick stay home from school, work and social gatherings.



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- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your elbow — not your bare hand — when you cough or sneeze.
- Eat a balanced diet of vegetables, fruits, whole grain products, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, and beans.
- Don't share personal items, such as towels, lipstick, toys or anything else that might be

contaminated with germs. Don't share food, utensils or beverage containers.

- Clean and sanitize household surfaces using a disinfecting household cleaner, a bleach solution (1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water) or rubbing alcohol.



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Safe Food Handling

Proper handling and cooking of chicken and other poultry provides protection against viruses such as Salmonella, E. coli, and potentially, avian influenza ("bird") virus. Although there is no evidence of the "H5N1" avian flu virus is in the U.S. you should take appropriate precautions to protect you and your family from eating contaminated poultry.

Additionally, a flood, blizzard or public health disaster could jeopardize the safety of the food in your home. To protect you and your family from foodborne illness practice these three behaviors — hand washing, cooking meats and eggs thoroughly and cleaning and sanitizing your cooking area.

Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health encourages the following guidelines in each of these areas.

Hand Washing

- Wet your hands with warm running water, apply soap, clean fingernails, and rub hands together for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry hands using a paper towel or air dryer.

Cooking Food

- Have a food thermometer on hand. Verify that meats have been cooked to the recommended minimum internal temperature on the packaging, or at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Cook eggs until the whites and yolks are solid. Avoid eating raw or lightly cooked eggs in such foods as raw cookie dough, homemade mayonnaise, and dressings made with raw eggs.



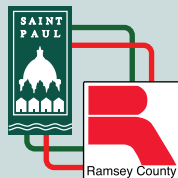
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Cleaning and Sanitizing

- First, clean all surfaces in the kitchen with hot soapy water.
- Then, sanitize with a disinfectant such bleach, ammonia or rubbing alcohol. (Never mix those disinfectants together.) Sanitizing is the only way to remove germs from a surface. Use 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water.



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Influenza (flu) Pandemics

An influenza pandemic or pandemic flu occurs when a type of influenza (“flu”) virus changes — or mutates — into a form that easily spreads from person to person and moves from country to country, continent to continent.

Unlike the more common seasonal flu, a flu pandemic would affect people all over the world and cause more deaths than seasonal flu. Pandemics are caused by viruses which spread when droplets containing them are passed from person to person. They infect noses, throats and lungs.

Treating Patients

Since a pandemic flu virus can’t be predicted in advance no reliable way exists to develop a vaccine which will effectively protect people from the strain. Once the flu virus causing the pandemic is identified, scientists will develop a vaccine as rapidly as possible.

Influenza Pandemic Preparation

Washing your hands regularly is one of the best ways to protect yourself against any kind of infectious disease. Cough into a tissue or your sleeve instead of into your hands, while keeping your hands away from your nose, mouth and eyes.

Prepare an emergency information list of important phone numbers and contacts. Gather supplies.



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Your Community During A Pandemic

An influenza pandemic could cause severe illnesses and deaths interrupting normal daily activities at work, home and school.

The Media

The media will play an important role in an influenza pandemic. They will be working closely with Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health to give the region important and accurate information.



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