

Protect yourself from flu



What is flu?

Flu is an infection of the air passage (respiratory tract) caused by a virus. There are many kinds of flu. Many people get flu during the cold season. But seasonal flu is usually mild and does not cause much harm.

How do people get flu?

Flu gets from one person to another through droplets that come from the mouth and nose of an infected person during spitting, coughing, sneezing and talking. These droplets can go as far as one metre away. The viruses in the droplets remain alive for several hours on hard surfaces such as tables, telephones, door handles, clothes, paper and key boards. The people who come in contact with these surfaces pick up the viruses.



The viruses then get into their bodies when they eat or touch their noses, mouths and eyes with contaminated hands. Flu viruses also get into the body through breathing in air with viruses.

What are the signs and symptoms of flu?

Flu may cause fever, a runny nose, cough, sore throat, headache, body aches, chills and body weakness. It may also cause diarrhoea and vomiting.



Is flu a serious disease?

Most types of flu are mild and last only a short time and clear, even without treatment. But other kinds of flu last longer and can be very serious. In the past, flu has caused epidemics on a large scale and killed many people. The Spanish Flu of 1918, the Asian Flu of 1957 and the Hong Kong Flu of 1968 killed many people.

How can I know that the flu I have is ordinary or dangerous?

When flu starts, it is difficult to tell whether it is ordinary or dangerous. However, flu should be considered dangerous when a person with flu-like symptoms begins to show any two of the following signs:

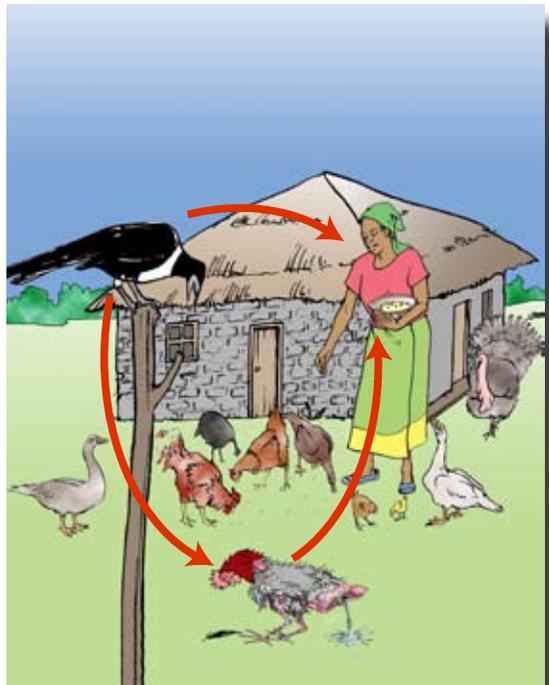
- A fever after contact with sick poultry, especially in an area where bird flu has been declared
- Difficulty in breathing, pain or pressure in the chest
- Restlessness or a tendency to get irritated easily (especially children)
- Flu-like symptoms which clear and return after a short time.

Patients with these signs should see a health worker for help immediately. They should also seek medical help immediately if they get flu-like symptoms after they have been in an area with Bird Flu or the H1N1 flu.

What is Bird Flu?

Bird flu is a disease that usually infects birds, but can also infect people. It is caused by the H5N1 virus. Bird flu has occurred in many countries, in all the continents, including Africa.

Bird flu can get from sick domestic and wild birds to human beings. People



usually get bird flu through close contact with infected chickens and other domestic birds. They can also get bird flu through:

- Contact with blood and fluids from an infected bird during slaughtering and preparing chicken for cooking,
- Eating poultry and poultry products that are not cooked well,
- Breathing in air with bird flu viruses.

Can bird flu be treated?

A patient with bird flu who seeks medical help early may be given medicines which can help the body to fight the disease and lead to recovery. Seek medical help early if you suspect that you have bird flu.

What is “swine flu”?

Although H1N1 was initially called “swine flu”, it does not come from pigs. It is a new flu in the world caused by the (H1N1) virus. It is also called novel influenza.

The H1N1 flu is usually a mild flu which can be transmitted from person to person easily. The disease can be treated. But in most cases patients recover fully after a short time without any treatment.

The H1N1 can also become severe and cause complications and death if not treated in good time. Seek medical help immediately if you think you have the H1N1 flu.

Patients with the H1N1 flu are often confined and monitored by health workers to ensure that their condition does not get worse. Confining people with H1N1 also ensures that they are treated in time if there is need and that they do not pass the disease on to other people.



Can I get infected with the H1N1 flu if I eat pork?

No. The H1N1 is not spread by pigs. It is safe to eat pork and pork products which have been prepared in a clean way and cooked well.

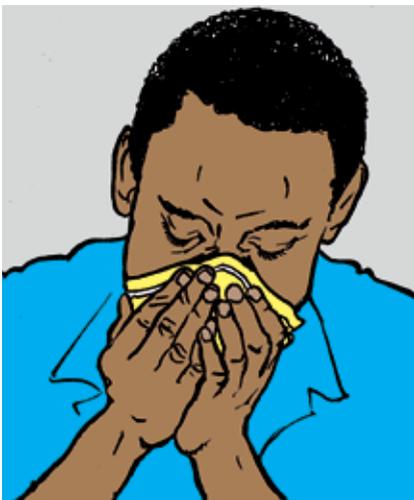
How can I protect myself and other people from flu?

You can protect yourself, your family and other people from all flus in the following ways:

1. Wash your hands with water and soap frequently

Hygiene is very important in prevention and control of flu. Wash your hands with water and soap, especially after:

- Coughing and sneezing
- Shaking hands with people who have flu-like symptoms
- Handling poultry and poultry products, such as eggs
- Cleaning the poultry house or touch poultry droppings
- Slaughtering and preparing poultry for cooking.



Encourage people in your household to wash their hands with water and soap frequently. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

2. Keeping your distance

Avoid crowded areas such as markets, public meetings and entertainment places:

- Keep at least one metre away from a person with flu-like symptoms.
- Stay home if you are sick with flu-like symptoms to avoid infecting other people

3. Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing

Sneeze in your sleeves or use tissue and throw the tissue in the waste basket.

4. Keep away from people with flu-like symptoms, especially if you have other health problems or you are pregnant.

Flu can complicate your condition.



5. Separating the sick

Keep a person sick with flu-like symptoms away from other people if you can:

- Keep open the windows in the room with a person with flu-like symptoms
- Remind the sick person to cover his or her mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.



6. Maintain high standards of hygiene

Maintain high standards of hygiene to protect yourself, your family and other people from flu.



Clean common items used in the house with water and soap or wipe with a household disinfectant. The objects to clean include tables, telephones, key boards, door handles, clothing, bedside tables, kitchen counters and baby toys.

7. Follow government advice

Follow the advice given by the government and health officials on how to prevent flu.

Is it safe to travel to places or countries which have reported bird flu or H1N1?

At the moment, health authorities do not advise any travel restrictions to places with bird flu. But while there, avoid contact with live animals and birds in food markets. Also avoid surfaces that appear to be contaminated with faeces from poultry and birds.

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