

Advice for contacts of birds or animals infected with H5 bird flu

Why am I being followed up?

You may have been exposed to H5 [bird flu](#) – which is also called avian influenza. H5 bird flu is caused by specific influenza A viruses that usually infect birds but can spread to humans. Further information is available at [Avian influenza in humans \(bird flu\)](#) fact sheet.

What is the risk?

H5 bird flu does not spread easily from birds or animals to humans. You might be at increased risk of infection if you have:

- had direct contact with infected birds or animals, their body fluids or contaminated environments,
- breathed in dust contaminated by infected birds or animals, or
- handled or processed raw poultry products.

Person to person spread is very rare.

What do I need to do?

1. Monitor your health

Watch for symptoms for 10 days after your last contact with an infected animal or bird. See the section below, 'How to monitor your health' for information about symptoms.

2. Take antiviral medicine if recommended

Your public health unit may recommend antiviral medicine. This requires a prescription from a doctor. Where recommended, this can help lower your chance of getting sick after exposure.

3. Perform good hygiene

You and other people in your household should wash your hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub. Cover coughs and sneezes and put used tissues in a bin.

4. Protect yourself from further exposures

If you are working in or visit a place affected by H5 bird flu, you can lower your risk of exposure by wearing the correct personal protective equipment (PPE). Further information on PPE can be found here: [Bird flu toolkit for people who work with birds](#).

5. Look after your mental health

Being exposed to H5 bird flu, seeing sick or dead animals, or working in an affected industry may be upsetting.

Look after your mental health with small, daily habits like getting regular sleep, staying active, eating well, connecting with others, and sticking to trusted sources of information.

If you require further support, you can contact:

- Your doctor or health professional
- Lifeline on 131114 (24 hours a day)
- Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 (24 hours a day)
- 13YARN on 13 92 76 (24 hours a day)

How to monitor your health

Your public health unit will provide information on what to do, including when to start and stop checking for symptoms.

Symptoms include:

- fever or chills
- conjunctivitis (red and sore eyes)
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or blocked nose, or sneezing
- headache
- muscle aches
- tiredness or weakness
- diarrhoea, nausea, or vomiting

You may be required to take your temperature and record the reading regularly.

Your public health unit may contact you by phone call or SMS for a period of time to ensure you are well.

What do I do if I get symptoms?

1. Call your local [public health unit](#). They will give advice and support.
2. Call your doctor. Tell them you may have been exposed to H5 bird flu and now have symptoms.
3. Stay away from others as much as possible until you have been checked by a doctor.
4. Continue good hygiene
 - a. cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze,
 - b. wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcoholic hand rub,
 - c. dispose of used tissues in the bin, and
 - d. wear a mask if you cannot stay away from others.

In an emergency, call 000 or go to the nearest emergency department. Tell ambulance or hospital staff that you may have been exposed to H5 bird flu.