



The facts about avian influenza

What is it?

- Avian influenza (AI), commonly known as "bird flu", is a contagious viral infection that can affect several species of birds.
- The AI virus circulates naturally in wild birds around the world, and is spread through wild or migratory birds, especially ducks.
- AI viruses can be classified into 2 categories: low pathogenicity (LPAI) and high pathogenicity (HPAI), based on the severity of the illness caused in birds.
- In 2022, there is an outbreak of H5N1 HPAI in Canada.

Can I catch it?

- Human infection with the H5N1 virus is rare but it can happen.
- The people most at risk are those who come in contact with infected birds through their jobs or their hobbies.
- Most people who have been infected with the current H5N1 have suffered mild symptoms, such as pink eye or mild respiratory issues. Because some H5N1 viruses have been shown to cause serious illnesses in the past, it is still important to take precautions.
- **If you think you have been exposed to AI or if you become ill after handling birds, see your health care provider. Be sure to inform your health care provider that you have been in contact with birds.**

How can I protect myself?

- Avoid handling dead birds or live birds that are acting strangely (nervousness, tremors or lack of coordination, swelling around the head, neck and eyes, lack of energy or movement, coughing, gasping for air or sneezing)
- Do not feed wild birds by hand
- If you must come in contact with wild birds:
 - wear gloves (or use a doubled plastic bag), a mask, and protective glasses
 - avoid contact with blood, body fluids or feces
 - wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water afterwards
- **If you see sick or dead wild birds, contact your local conservation officer or the Canadian Wildlife Cooperative at 1-800-567-2033.**

For more information, please visit inspection.gc.ca/ai