



Health Advice on the Prevention of Influenza

Global and local situation

On 26 January 2004, health authorities in Thailand announced laboratory confirmed H5N1 infection in three children. In Vietnam, as of 24 January 2004, there were 7 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with H5N1 virus. Six of them died. Concurrently, H5N1 avian influenza outbreaks among poultry have been reported in many Southeast Asian countries including Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. At present, the World Health Organization stated that there is no evidence that person-to-person transmission is occurring.

Human infection with avian influenza H5N1 is under close surveillance in Hong Kong by the Department of Health. During the recent three weeks, there is no abnormal rise in influenza activity. No human influenza H5N1 infection has been detected in Hong Kong since the last two cases in February 2003.

Preventive Measures

In view of widespread H5N1 infections among poultry in many neighboring countries, as well as confirmed human cases in Vietnam and Thailand, the Department of Health advocates an active and prudent approach in taking preventive measures. Institutions are advised to take note of the specific measures highlighted below for the prevention of avian influenza and influenza in general:

- Refrain from keeping live birds where possible
- Establish barriers to prevent inmates from touching live birds
- Do not touch live birds, poultry and their excreta
- Avoid organising activities that may expose inmates to live birds
- Wash hands with soap and water immediately after contact with live birds or surfaces contaminated by bird droppings
- Wash hands with soap and water after sneezing/coughing
- Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly, use liquid soap for hand washing and disposal towel for drying hands
- Do not share towels

- Cleanse furniture and shared items properly
- Maintain good ventilation
- If inmates develop respiratory symptoms; they should
 - Consult their doctor promptly
 - Wear a surgical mask

Apart from the above specific measure, building up good body immunity by having a proper diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, reducing stress and avoiding smoking are also precautionary measures to prevent respiratory infections.

You are also advised to refer to the guidelines published by the Department of Health for general information on the prevention of communicable diseases in institutional settings.

The Department of Health stands ready to offer advice and assistance to your institution in the control and prevention of communicable diseases. If staff detect unusual pattern of illnesses among inmates, please notify such incidents to the respective Regional Office of the Department of Health. The contact numbers are as follows :

Regional Office	Telephone Number
Hong Kong Regional Office	2961 8729
Kowloon Regional Office	2199 9149
New Territories East Regional Office	2158 5107
New Territories West Regional Office	2615 8571

Department of Health
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