



H7N9 Fact Sheet

What is H7N9?

H7N9 is one type of the flu virus that can be found in birds. Previously, this type of flu virus had never been found in humans before. However, in April 2013, there were multiple cases of humans in China infected with a new strain of H7N9. Scientists think that the humans became infected after coming into contact with an infected bird.

How are people getting infected with the virus?

If a person touches an infected bird or something that is contaminated with the virus and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth, they may be infected. There is also some evidence that the virus can become airborne.

Is infection with this virus serious?

Although some of the human cases of the infection reported mild symptoms, and one person that reported positive for the virus did not show any symptoms, most of the reported cases have been very serious. Symptoms of the illness start with a high fever and cough. Many of the cases have led to pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, septic shock, and multi-organ failure and death.

Can the infection spread from person to person?

Investigators follow up with each reported case of H7N9 infection to determine how they might have become infected. So far, hundreds of close contacts have been followed up on and there has not been any evidence to indicate the spread of this virus from person to person. However, based on what we know about human infections with other bird flu viruses, it is possible and very likely that there will be some limited person to person spread of this virus. Officials are watching this situation very closely.

Is there a vaccine to protect people from the H7N9?

The CDC and others are working at the present time to develop a vaccine. However, antiviral resistance testing has been completed by the CDC and the tests show that this virus is sensitive to the two flu antiviral drugs Tamiflu and Relenza. Flu viruses are always changing and some of these changes can result in viruses becoming resistant to one or more of the flu antiviral drugs. The H7N9 viruses found in China are very different from other H7N9 viruses, and they continue to evolve, so ongoing testing by the CDC will continue.

*For further information, contact the Oklahoma City-County Health Department
(405) 425-4437 or Epi@occhd.org*

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What is the risk from this virus in the United States?

This risk is considered low. However, many people travel to and from China every day, so the CDC and other health officials recommend being on the lookout for flu-like symptoms in travelers who are returning from countries with bird flu. Since the virus does not seem to spread easily from human to human, the CDC does not recommend any travel limitations to and from China. They will, however, continue to monitor this closely. The CDC recommends that travelers to China follow common sense precautions to protect themselves and monitor their health during and after their trip. Anyone with fever, coughing, or shortness of breath within 10 days of traveling to China should see a doctor and tell the doctor about recent travel to China.

The Oklahoma City-County Health Department, the CDC, and other world health leaders will continue to monitor this very carefully.

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