

Health Advice on Prevention of Avian / Human Swine Influenza in Workplace

Avian influenza

Avian influenza (H5N1) is a type of influenza A that mainly infects birds but occasionally affects humans. Avian influenza can be transmitted from birds to people, although transmission between humans, up to this moment, is very inefficient. The initial symptoms of avian flu are similar to those of other influenza viruses, including fever, generalised muscle pain, cough and sore throat. However, it is more likely to result in high fever, chest infection, respiratory failure, multi-organ failure, and death.

Human swine influenza

The H1N1 swine flu viruses are antigenically different from human H1N1 viruses. Human-to-human transmission of swine flu is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu is spread among people, mainly through coughing or sneezing. People may also become infected by touching objects soiled with flu viruses and then touching their nose or mouth. The symptoms of human swine influenza are usually similar to those of human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, loss of appetite and coughing. Some people infected with swine flu may also have runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Preventive measures in workplace

Staff:

- Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing and wash hands with soap and water afterwards.
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly with liquid soap, and use hand dryer or disposable towel for drying hand.
- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene.
- Building up good body resistance through a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest, reducing stress, and not smoking.
- If staff develop influenza-like symptoms such as fever, sore throat and cough, they should :
 - ◆ consult their doctor promptly;
 - ◆ wear a surgical mask; and
 - ◆ take rest at home.

Office management:

- Ensure liquid soap, disposable towels or hand dryers are provided in toilets.
- Maintain a clean and hygienic working environment. Clean and disinfect the furniture and commonly-used equipment (e.g. telephones) at least daily and when visibly soiled by using appropriate disinfectant (e.g. 1 part of 5.25% household bleach in 99 parts water for non-metallic or 70% alcohol for metallic surface). Leave for 15 to 30 minutes and then rinse with water.
- If places are contaminated by respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta, use disposable towels to wipe them away. Then disinfect the surface and neighbouring area with appropriate disinfectant (e.g. 1 part 5.25% household bleach in 49 parts water for non-metallic or 70% alcohol for metallic surface), leave for 15 to 30 minutes, and then rinse with water.
- Ensure good ventilation
 - ◆ Keep air-conditioners well-maintained and wash the dust-filters frequently
 - ◆ Switch on wall fan and any circulating or exhaust fan to enhance air movement
 - ◆ Windows of office should be opened from time to time for better ventilation, but make sure that window and louver are not located on the same wall
- If a staff develop influenza-like symptoms such as fever, sore throat and cough, remind him/her to stay at home and consult a doctor immediately

For more information

Please visit the website of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health at <http://www.chp.gov.hk> or call the Department of Health's 24-hour Health Education Hotline at 2833 0111.

Centre for Health Protection

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