

Avian influenza (H5N1), patient information

Why have I received this information?

You are receiving this information because tests have shown that you have confirmed avian influenza (H5N1).

The information is also aimed at those who have been exposed to the risk of infection. You have been tested and are now waiting for your test results, i.e., you have suspected avian influenza (H5N1).

What is avian influenza (H5N1)?

Avian influenza (H5N1) is a viral disease caused by the influenza A virus subtype H5N1. The avian influenza virus is normally found in wild aquatic birds that carry the virus without being sick. If the infection is spread to a poultry flock (poultry farm), the poultry can become severely ill with high mortality rates. In rare cases, the influenza A (H5N1) virus can be transmitted to mammals and humans and can cause a serious infection, often more severe than regular seasonal influenza.

In case of illness

Those with confirmed or suspected avian influenza (H5N1) will usually be treated with antiviral medicines.

How is avian influenza (H5N1) transmitted?

It is most common for a person to become infected through close contact with sick or dead land fowl. Transmission can also occur from other wild or domestic birds and probably also from diseased mammals, such as minks.

Influenza virus A (H5N1) is not easily spread between people. In rare cases, infection can occur through close contact with a sick person with respiratory symptoms, such as through close contact within a household.

There is no risk of infection outdoors or during brief contact, such as walking past someone in a shop or on public transport.

How long am I contagious?

A test has shown that you have avian influenza (H5N1).

If a test has shown that you have avian influenza (H5N1), you are contagious from the time of onset of your first respiratory symptoms and you must follow the rules of conduct given to you by your doctor (see below).

You are no longer contagious when at least 7 days have passed since the onset of symptoms and if you have not had fever for more than 2 days and your overall condition is markedly improved.

If you have a positive PCR test but no symptoms, you are no longer contagious 7 days from the day you took the test.

A test for avian influenza (H5N1) has been carried out, but no test results are yet available.

You have suspected avian influenza (H5N1) and must follow the rules of conduct given to you by your doctor (see below). Your doctor will contact you when the results are available. If your results are negative for avian influenza (H5N1), the rules of conduct cease to apply.

What should I keep in mind so as not to infect others?**You have received rules of conduct**

Avian influenza (H5N1) is classified as a disease that represents a danger to public health in the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. You must therefore follow certain rules given to you by your doctor, known as the 'rules of conduct': This means that you:

- should not go to work, school or preschool; working from home and distance learning are fine.
- should not participate in leisure or other social activities where you come into contact with other people.
- must inform healthcare and social care staff in any contact with them that you have or are suspected of having avian influenza (H5N1).
- must follow specific hygiene procedures, i.e., be thorough in your hand hygiene (wash your hands), cough and sneeze into the crook of your arm or in a handkerchief and not towards other people
- must return for a follow-up appointment or have telephone contact with healthcare if your doctor tells you to.

If you have been issued with a rule of conduct that you believe to be wrong, you can request that your county medical officer reviews it.

How long do these rules of conduct apply?

Your doctor will let you know when you are no longer infectious and when the rules of conduct cease to apply.

To protect others from infection, you are also required to:

- avoid close contact with other people both inside and outside your own household while you are contagious.
- inform people who may be at risk of infection that you have or are suspected of having avian influenza (H5N1), e.g., you must inform the people you live with.
- refrain from contact with birds and mammals.

Contact tracing

According to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act, you must participate in contact tracing. This means that you must provide information to healthcare professionals so they can assess when, where and how you may have been infected and whether you may have infected others. In cases of avian influenza (H5N1), the county veterinarian is also contacted regarding risks of infection linked to birds and animals.

The information you provide is confidential (under professional secrecy) and the people you name will not know who you are. You can choose to break confidentiality by informing them yourself.

If you work with birds or mammals, your employer should be informed. You can provide the information yourself, otherwise information will be provided that a person associated with the business has confirmed or suspected avian influenza (H5N1). If you are an animal owner, the county veterinarian will be informed under the Swedish Epizootic Diseases Act.

About the infection prevention sheet

The infection prevention sheet is produced by the Swedish Association of County Medical Officers and is valid nationally.