



(Translation)

Prevent Human Infection with H7N9 Avian Influenza — Guideline for Handlers of Poultry and Food

2013.4.6.

H7N9 avian influenza is caused by influenza H7N9 virus. In the past, H7N9 avian flu infection is mainly found in poultry and birds, with low pathogenicity. A few days ago, human infection with H7N9 avian influenza has been identified in the eastern region of the mainland for the first time. The conditions of the infected cases are serious, with a high fatality rate, of which certain cases have a history of occupational or contact exposure to poultry, birds or other animals; therefore, handlers of poultry and food are urged to stay vigilant and take precautionary measures against the disease.

Clinical features

Early symptoms of the disease are similar to those of other respiratory infections, including fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Severe infection can result in respiratory failure, multi-organ failure and even death.

Mode of transmission

There is still uncertainty at the moment. Based on the information on other subtypes of avian flu viruses (e.g. H5N1), people mainly become infected with H7N9 virus through close contact with infected birds and poultry (live or dead) or other animals or their droppings. There is so far no evidence of human-to-human infection. Incubation period is 7 days.

High risk groups

People in close contact with poultry or other animals are more susceptible to contracting H7N9 avian influenza virus. The elderly, children and people with chronic illness have a higher risk of developing complications such as pneumonia.

Management

Based on the current information, H7N9 avian influenza is generally more severe than common flu, and most patients require hospital care. Some anti-viral drugs may be effective in treating the condition; H7N9 virus is susceptible to the anti-viral drugs oseltamivir, Tamiflu and zanamivir, Relenza. Treatments are mainly supportive. Patients should get adequate rest and drink plenty of water. In severe cases, artificial lungs and mechanical ventilation may be required. Unless there is bacterial infections, antibiotics should not be used.

Prevention

In order to prevent infection of H7N9 avian flu, handlers of poultry and food are reminded to be vigilant against the disease and adopt the following measures:



For poultry handlers

1. Avoid, whenever possible, direct contact with live birds or poultry and their secretions or excretions; if impossible, wear mask and gloves before touching, and wash hands with water and liquid soap thoroughly after touching and taking off gloves and mask;
2. Wear working uniform (preferably impermeable), boots, impermeable apron and long cuffed sleeves, mask and gloves when handling live poultry and birds or cleaning the used utensils and areas residing the live poultry and birds. Take off all the clothing before leaving the working place, and avoid taking them home;
3. Wear gown, gloves, cap, N95 mask and boots when handling the infected or suspected infected birds, poultry or other animals. Change the clothing and wash hands thoroughly before going home;
4. Maintain good ventilation and environmental hygiene of the working place;
5. If you develop fever or any respiratory symptoms, wear a mask and consult a doctor promptly. Remember to tell the doctor about your contact history of live birds or poultry.

For food handlers

1. Food establishments should not cull or slaughter live birds or poultry;
2. Observe food hygiene
 - Avoid putting the raw and cooked food together;
 - The utensils (including table, chopping board, knife and cooking utensils) used for food preparation should be cleansed properly before used for another kind of food preparation;
 - Poultry meat should be cooked thoroughly before serving.
3. Wash hands frequently, especially
 - before handling food;
 - after going to toilet;
 - before cooking or preparing any kind of food;
 - after coughing or sneezing.
4. Maintain good ventilation and environmental hygiene of the working place;
5. If you develop fever or any respiratory symptoms, wear a mask and consult a doctor promptly. Remember to tell the doctor about your contact history of live birds or poultry.

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention

Health Bureau