



## **Health Advisory**

November 4, 2024

### **Updated H5N1 Testing and Treatment Guidance**

The Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH) is actively monitoring for Avian Influenza A (H5N1 or bird flu) in Fresno County. There are now [19 confirmed cases](#) of H5N1 in humans in California. All have involved individuals working with cattle or poultry, most on dairy farms. Most have had mild flu symptoms, characterized by the presence of conjunctivitis. Per the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the risk to the general public remains low.

People who interact with infected animals are at higher risk of getting H5N1. To date, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has not identified any person-to-person spread of H5N1 in the United States. The FCDPH recommends that personal protective equipment (PPE), such as respirators (N95 masks), eye protection (face shields or safety goggles), and gloves be worn by anyone working with animals or materials that are infected or potentially infected with H5N1 to prevent infection.

Pasteurized milk and dairy products continue to be safe to consume, as pasteurization is fully effective at inactivating the bird flu virus.

People exposed to infected animals should monitor for the following symptoms for 10 days after their last exposure: conjunctivitis, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhea, vomiting, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, trouble breathing, and fever. If they become symptomatic, patients should be advised to immediately isolate, notify their health care provider and FCDPH, and get timely testing and treatment.

**Please advise these patients to wear a well-fitted mask prior to arrival and during medical care and ensure that medical staff follow contact and airborne precautions and wear appropriate PPE while evaluating them.**

#### **Recommendations for Healthcare Providers:**

- a) **The CDPH issued the following recommendations for healthcare providers:** [Avian Influenza A \(H5N1\) Information for Health Professionals](#)
- b) **Additional H5N1 Testing Guidance for Physicians Practicing in Fresno County:**  
Confirmed H5N1 human illness is an immediately notifiable condition. Persons with suspected occupationally acquired H5N1 should be promptly isolated, and any confirmed or suspected cases

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Categories of Health Alert Messages:

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action

**Health Information:** Provides general health information which is not considered to be of emergent nature

#### ***Promotion, preservation and protection of the community's health***

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should be reported to the FCDPH Communicable Disease Investigation (CDI) Program. Please provide the name of the individual being tested, date of birth, address, phone number, name of agricultural employer if known, and point of care influenza and COVID-19 testing results if performed.

- FCDPH CDI Program:  
Phone: (559) 600-3332 (Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm) or (559) 600-3111 (after - hours, weekends, or holidays).

Although specimen collection should be conducted by the healthcare provider, currently testing for H5N1 is conducted exclusively at public health laboratories. Therefore, coordinating with the FCDPH for the recommended tests, storage, and shipping is crucial. Guidance on H5N1 specimen collection, testing and reporting can also be requested with these same FCDPH contact numbers.

- Use appropriate PPE when evaluating patients with suspected H5N1 with standard, contact and airborne precautions.
- Health care providers should test individuals who are symptomatic (signs and symptoms consistent with acute upper respiratory tract infection or conjunctivitis) and have a history of exposure in the last 10 days to animals suspected or confirmed to have H5N1 (e.g., dairy, poultry, or slaughterhouse workers).
- Health care providers are encouraged to perform point of care influenza and COVID-19 testing in addition to sending proper Influenza PCR samples to FCDPH's lab for processing. Even if point of care influenza testing is negative or if COVID-19 testing is positive, PCR samples should still be collected and sent. See further PCR testing instructions below.
  - If influenza A PCR testing is positive, the FCDPH lab will coordinate with testing facility to have sample sent to FCDPH lab for influenza subtyping. If probable positive H5N1 sample is identified, FCDPH lab will coordinate with CDPH to have sample sent to the CDC for confirmatory testing.

H5N1 PCR Testing Protocol:

Per CDPH: [Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Information for Health Professionals](#):

- Specimens should ideally be collected within 24–72 hours of symptom onset and no later than 10 days after symptom onset.
- Respiratory specimens (e.g., nasopharyngeal swabs, nasal swabs, throat swabs, or dual nasopharyngeal/throat swabs) should be collected from people experiencing any symptoms potentially associated with H5N1 with:
  - A single nasopharyngeal (NP) swab AND 2. a combined nasal swab and oropharyngeal swab (e.g. two swabs combined into one viral transport media vial). <https://pdfink.to/vrdlfluah5testingguidance/>
- A conjunctival swab should also be collected from anyone experiencing conjunctivitis at the time the conjunctival specimen is being collected. A conjunctival swab MUST be paired with a nasopharyngeal swab even if the person does not have respiratory symptoms. [Conjunctival Swab Specimen Collection for Detection of Avian Influenza A\(H5\) Viruses \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- FCDPH will coordinate pick-up of specimens collected at your office for H5N1 testing.

Isolation recommendations:

- At this time, the FCDPH recommends that symptomatic individuals should isolate at home until any eye infection/redness has resolved, any fever has been gone 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications, and any other symptoms are mild and improving.

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- Symptomatic individuals should wear a well-fitting mask when around others in the home. Respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene with frequent handwashing are strongly recommended.
- Symptomatic individuals whose symptoms are improving may return to work if cleared by their employer and when wearing appropriate PPE.

### Treatment:

- Initiation of antiviral treatment with oseltamivir (Tamiflu) is recommended as soon as possible for patients with confirmed, probable, or suspected H5N1 infection. Antiviral treatment should not be delayed while waiting for laboratory test results as antiviral treatment is more effective if given within 48 hours of illness onset.
- The standard dose of oseltamivir for adults is 75 mg twice daily for 5 days. Oseltamivir should be adjusted for age and renal function.

### c) Seasonal Flu Vaccination:

- The FCDPH recommends all residents — especially workers at risk for exposure to H5N1 — receive a seasonal flu vaccine as well as the updated COVID-19 vaccine. Although the seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against H5N1, it can decrease the risk of being infected with multiple viruses at the same time and reduce the chance of severe illness from seasonal flu.
- Seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available by appointment at the FCDPH Immunization Program. Appointments can be scheduled by calling (559) 600-3550.
- For patient handouts regarding H5N1, please visit the FCDPH Avian Flu website: [Avian Influenza \(BIRD FLU\) - County of Fresno](#)