

Health Alert for University Students & Staff Traveling Abroad

Last Updated: August 1, 2006

At present, the CDC has elevated its previous notice to a **Travel Health Precaution** because of recent reports about the **Avian Influenza A (H5N1)**. Avian influenza A (H5N1) is a viral infection that usually affects wild birds but can infect and cause serious disease among poultry, such as chickens. The virus appears to have originated in Asia but has now been identified in more than 50 countries including some in Europe and Africa. While it is unusual for humans to get influenza virus infections directly from poultry or wild birds, a number of human infections and outbreaks caused by certain Avian Influenza A viruses have been documented. H5N1 infections in humans can cause serious disease that is often fatal. So far there is little conclusive evidence of human-to-human transmission of the disease and there is no human vaccine available to prevent avian influenza. To protect your health, please follow these guidelines:

BEFORE you travel:

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of the Avian influenza: fever, difficulty breathing, cough
- Make sure you are up to date on your shots. Visit the UF Travel Clinic 4-6 weeks prior to your departure for immunizations and travel health counseling. Call 392-1161 ext. 4312 or 392-0627 to schedule an appointment. Go to www.cdc.gov/travel/seasia.htm for more information.
- Travel with a first aid kit including a thermometer and alcohol-based hand rub for hand hygiene.
- Check your health insurance plan or get additional insurance that will cover you while out of the U.S. For more information go to www.travel.state.gov

WHILE traveling:

- Avoid places such as poultry farms and bird markets where live poultry are raised or kept, and avoid contact with sick or dead poultry.
- As with other infectious illnesses, one of the most important preventive practices is careful and frequent hand washing. Cleaning your hands often, using either soap and water or waterless alcohol-based hand rubs, removes potentially infectious materials from your skin and helps prevent disease transmission.
- Influenza viruses are destroyed by heat; therefore, as a precaution, all foods from poultry, including eggs and poultry blood, should be thoroughly cooked.
- If you become sick with symptoms such as a fever, difficulty breathing, cough, or any illness that requires prompt medical attention, a U.S. consular officer can assist you in locating medical services and informing your family or friends. It is advisable that you defer further travel until you are free of symptoms.

AFTER your return:

- Monitor your health for 10 days.
- If you become ill with fever, difficulty breathing, cough, or any illness during this period, call the UF Student Health Care Center Travel Clinic and speak with the travel clinic nurse. Call 392-1161 ext. 4312 or 392-0627. Tell them **1) your symptoms, 2) where you traveled, and 3) if you have had direct contact with poultry or a very sick person so that they can be aware you have traveled to an area reporting avian influenza.**

For more information about H5N1 infections in humans, visit the World Health Organization at www.who.int/csr/don/en

Also visit the CDC site at www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm.

*Content taken from CDC website