



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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TO: Hospitals, Local Health Departments
FROM: NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control

INFLUENZA A(H5N1) SURVEILLANCE ADVISORY

Please distribute immediately to the Infection Control Department, Emergency Department, Employee Health Service, Infectious Disease Department, Director of Nursing, Medical Director, Laboratory Service, and all patient care areas.

BACKGROUND

Since mid-December, outbreaks of influenza A(H5N1) have been detected among poultry in South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia. Additional countries, including Indonesia and Myanmar, have detected deaths in poultry flocks, and the cause is currently under investigation.

Human cases and deaths caused by the same H5N1 virus have been reported in two of these countries, Vietnam and Thailand. Most of these cases have been linked to direct contact with diseased birds. At present, the World Health Organization (WHO) has no information that the disease is spread from person to person.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At this time, CDC recommends enhanced surveillance efforts by state and local health departments, hospitals, and clinicians to rapidly identify an importation of influenza A(H5N1) into the United States from Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar should one occur.

As part of these recommendations, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) requests that, starting immediately, hospitals perform surveillance for patients meeting **both** of the following criteria:

1. Patient hospitalized with unexplained pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), or severe respiratory illness,

AND

2. Travel to Vietnam, South Korea, Japan Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar within 10 days from onset of symptoms.

For patients meeting the above criteria:

- Immediately report any suspect cases to your local health department.
- Test for influenza virus infection by rapid antigen detection. Obtain a nasopharyngeal or throat swab for submission to the NYSDOH Wadsworth Center for further testing to rule out the A(H5N1) strain.
- Viral culture on these specimens should be performed only in laboratories with BSL-3+/BSL-3Ag capability. If your laboratory does not have this capability, ***do not perform viral cultures on these specimens.***
- Prior to submitting these specimens to the NYSDOH, the hospital or laboratory should telephone the Wadsworth Center at either of the following numbers to discuss submission of the specimens: (518) 869-4559 or (518) 862-4320.
- Obtain a serum specimen on the suspect case and hold for further serologic testing if necessary.
- If you have any questions with regard to influenza A(H5N1), please contact your local health department or New York State Health Department Regional Epidemiologist. Laboratory questions should be directed to the Wadsworth Center numbers listed above.

At this time, CDC and WHO have not recommended any restrictions on travel to countries currently experiencing outbreaks of H5N1 avian infection in poultry flocks, including countries which have also reported cases in humans. However, travelers to these countries are advised to avoid contact with animals in live food markets and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. As a precaution, consumers should ensure that all foods from poultry, including eggs, have been thoroughly cooked.

In tropical regions, influenza can occur at any time during the year. Thus, persons who are at increased risk of developing influenza-related complications and healthy persons who wish to decrease their risk of becoming ill with influenza should receive the 2003-04 trivalent influenza vaccine.

For further details about the reported cases of influenza A (H5N1), see the WHO Web site www.who.int/en/. Additional information about influenza is available on the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov.

As influenza activity changes, we will keep you apprised of updated recommendations.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.