

Avian Influenza Vaccine

Get protected, get immunized.

- Immune globulins are passive immunization agents. This means they give quick, short-term protection.
- For long-term protection, you need a vaccine.

What is the avian influenza vaccine?

The avian influenza vaccine protects against the avian influenza virus (H5N1).

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza, sometimes called bird flu, is caused by a virus that mainly affects birds. It has also been found in other animals, and in rare cases, people.

Avian Influenza in people is a respiratory illness that affects the airway and lungs. It can also affect the digestive system and the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). Symptoms may include:

- cough
- shortness of breath
- fever
- aching muscles
- headache
- diarrhea (watery stool)
- runny nose
- sore throat
- feeling very tired
- red eyes
- bleeding gums

About 52% of people who get sick with avian influenza will die. This is usually due to respiratory failure, when the lungs can't get enough oxygen.

Who is most at risk?

Some things can put you at higher risk of avian influenza, including:

- Working or being in contact with infected farm animals like chickens, turkeys, ducks, goats, and cows or infected wild birds, or wild mammals.
- Working with wild birds for things like research, conservation, or rehabilitation.
- Working with wild animals that eat wild birds (like foxes, skunks, raccoons, mink and some sea mammals).
- Visiting animal farms or live animal markets.

How does it spread?

The most common way the virus is spread to people is close contact with infected animals.

Avian influenza can spread in the following ways:

- Having contact with animal feces (poop) or fluids such as mucus and saliva.
- Breathing in the virus through air droplets, dust, or feathers.
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

The risk of infection is low for the general public who have limited contact with infected animals.

Who should get the avian influenza vaccine?

Your healthcare provider may recommend the avian influenza vaccine for you if:

- You work in a lab and have contact with the avian influenza virus. This could be people who work in animal diagnostic labs.
- You work with birds or other animals with avian influenza.

How many doses do I need?

You need 2 doses, at least 3 weeks apart.

If you have any health conditions that affect your nervous system (brain, spinal cord, nerves), talk to your healthcare provider about when you can get this vaccine.

How well does the vaccine work?

The avian influenza vaccine is the best way to lower your risk of avian influenza and its related health problems.

This vaccine can also help prevent you from spreading avian influenza to others.

Where can I get the avian influenza vaccine?

If you are eligible to get avian influenza vaccine, you can get it for free at your local public health or community health centre.

See reverse for more information.

Are there side effects from the avian influenza vaccine?

There can be side effects from the avian influenza vaccine, but they tend to be mild and go away in a few days. Side effects may include:

- redness where you had the needle that may look red on lighter skin or purple on darker skin
- swelling or feeling sore where you had the needle
- headache
- feeling tired or getting upset easily
- a fever or chills
- body aches or sore joints
- not feeling hungry or not wanting to eat (poor appetite)
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea) or loose stool (diarrhea)
- sweating

At least 1 out of 100 people who got this vaccine reported 1 or more of these side effects. In some cases, it is unknown if the vaccine caused these side effects.

It is important to stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after your vaccine. Some people may have a rare but serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. If anaphylaxis happens, you will get medicine to treat the symptoms.

It is rare to have a serious side effect after a vaccine. Call Health Link at 811 to report any serious or unusual side effects.

How can I manage side effects?

- To help with soreness and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area where you had the needle.
- There is medicine to help with a fever or pain. Check with your healthcare provider if you are not sure what medicine or dose to take. Follow the directions on the package.
- Some people with health problems, such as a weak immune system, must call their healthcare provider if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your healthcare provider even if you think the fever is from the vaccine.

What if I had or am getting another type of vaccine?

You need to wait 6 weeks between the avian influenza vaccine and any other vaccine.

If you had another vaccine in the last 6 weeks, ask your public health nurse about when you can get the avian influenza vaccine.

Who may not be able to get the avian influenza vaccine?

You may not be able to get this vaccine if:

- You have an allergy to any part of the vaccine, except eggs. If you have an allergy to eggs, you can safely get this vaccine. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any allergies you may have.
- You had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it.

If either of these apply, check with your public health nurse before you get the vaccine.

Although you can get the vaccine if you have a mild illness such as a cold or fever, you should stay home until you are feeling better to prevent spreading your illness to others.

I have a fear of needles. How can I prepare for my immunization?

Many adults and children are afraid of needles. There are things you can do before, during, and after immunization to be more comfortable.



Scan the QR code, visit ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort, or call Health Link at **811** for information.

For more information about immunization



Call Health Link at **811**



Scan the QR code or go to ahs.ca/immunize