

About bird flu

Avian influenza, or bird flu as it is more commonly known, is a contagious viral infection that can affect all species of birds and occasionally causes disease in humans.

Bird flu viruses (of which there are 15 types) infect wild bird populations, particularly water birds, typically without causing symptoms. When bird flu spreads to poultry or other birds, it can cause more severe disease. Outbreaks of avian influenza have been recognised in poultry flocks in most countries of the world for many years.

There are several types of bird flu and the strain involved in the current outbreak is called H5N1. The current strain of H5N1 has spread to many parts of the world by migratory birds and possibly through trade in poultry.

Although the H5N1 virus can cause severe and sometimes fatal infections in humans, the actual number of human cases around the world has been small relative to the number of outbreaks in birds. Human cases have almost all been in people who had close contact with infected poultry, usually from their own farms.

The bird flu situation continues to be monitored, and treatments and vaccines are being developed and tested as a precautionary matter in the event of an influenza pandemic starting.

How do I find out more?

For more information please contact the research staff at the Vaccine Trials Group on:

Telephone

9340 8542

or

Email

vtg@ichr.uwa.edu.au

In Perth, this study is run by the research nurses, doctors and scientists at the Vaccine Trials Group, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, in conjunction with Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and the University of Western Australia School of Paediatrics and Child Health.

The study is being sponsored by a pharmaceutical company.



Bird flu

vaccine study

for seniors

About this study

A pandemic occurs when humans are infected by the bird flu influenza virus and then pass this on to each other. The virus spreads widely and rapidly, as the human immune system is inexperienced at dealing with this virus.

The pandemic influenza vaccine is an Australian-developed vaccine designed to provide possible protection against the potentially fatal bird flu virus.

A low dose of this vaccine has already been tested in other Australians and is shown to be safe.

There is no live virus in the vaccine which means there is no chance of catching the infection from the vaccination.

Our research study is looking at the effectiveness of two different doses of the vaccine to determine the optimal amount of vaccine required to provide effective protection against bird flu.

This is an important part of preparing for a possible flu pandemic and planning for the mass production of the vaccine should an outbreak occur.

If effective, the vaccine can be used to protect people against infection with bird flu, whereas current medications only treat the infection after a person has been exposed.



Current standard flu vaccines won't provide protection against bird flu, as it is a very different strain of flu.

What does the study involve?

Each study participant will receive the actual bird flu vaccine - there are no placebos or control vaccines used in this study.

The study involves:

- four visits to the study centre over seven months
- two vaccines given approximately 21 days apart
- four blood tests over seven months
- Participants will be asked to keep a record of any symptoms that may occur following each immunisation

All information we collect will be kept confidential and secure.

Who is needed for the study?

Healthy people aged 65 years and over.



Are there any costs to me?

No, there are no costs involved and limited free parking is available.