



## **Prevention of Respiratory Infections**

Avian influenza (H5N1) is a type of Influenza A that mainly affects birds but occasionally affects humans. Avian influenza can be transmitted from infected live birds to man, although transmission between humans, up to this moment, is very inefficient. The initial symptoms of avian flu are similar to those of other influenza viruses, including fever, generalized muscle pain, cough and sore throat. However, it is more likely to result in high fever, chest infection, respiratory failure, multi-organ failure, even death.

In view of the increase in number and variety of wild birds found to be carrying H5N1 virus in various local districts in recent weeks and that Hong Kong has entered the usual peak season for influenza, Scout members are advised to adopt the following precautionary measures to reduce the risk of being infected:

- Avoid touching live birds or poultry or their excreta
- Wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water immediately after contact with live birds or surfaces contaminated by bird droppings
- Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing and wash hands with liquid soap and water afterwards
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly with liquid soap, and use hand dryer or disposable towel for drying hands, do not share towels
- Build up good body resistance through a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest and avoid too much stress
- If you feel unwell, especially if symptoms of respiratory infection develop, do not attend Group / Unit meetings and activities. Consult a doctor promptly and take rest at home.

In the course of Group / Unit meetings or activities, Scout leaders concerned should observe the following preventive and contingency measures as far as practicable:

- Avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation and organizing activities that may expose members to live birds
- Keep sufficient stock of face masks for members who may need one
- Enhance the hygiene facilities of the Group / Unit headquarters, keep the environment clean and maintain good ventilation
- For Groups / Units whose headquarters are situated in the suburbs or have outdoor activity areas, the leaders concerned should instruct their members not to feed the wild birds to lessen the inducement for them to linger or roost nearby
- If any sick, wounded or dead birds are found on the premises, initiate measures to prevent members to come into contact with them and call the Government hotline 1823 for advice on how to handle them. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department will collect the birds for laboratory examination, where necessary
- If members are found to have symptoms of respiratory infection, leaders should ensure such members wear a face mask and contact their parents as soon as possible for prompt medical treatment. A full list of all attendants for the activity should be kept for subsequent follow up action

For more information on the prevention of influenza, avian influenza and health advice, please visit the website of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health ([www.chp.gov.hk](http://www.chp.gov.hk)).

Patrick YIP (Acting)  
Chief Scout Executive