



What Every Maryland Student  
Should Know About  
the **Avian Flu** and  
University of Maryland  
Plans for a Possible Pandemic

# Introduction

## What is the Avian Flu?

According to the World Health Organization, Avian Influenza refers to “a large group of different influenza viruses that primarily affect birds. On rare occasions, these bird viruses can infect other species, including pigs and humans. The vast majority of avian influenza viruses do not infect humans. An influenza pandemic happens when a new virus subtype emerges that has not previously circulated in humans.

“For this reason, Avian (Flu) H5N1 is a strain with pandemic potential, since it might ultimately adapt into a strain that is contagious among humans. Once this adaptation occurs, it will no longer be a bird virus—it will be a human influenza virus. Influenza pandemics are caused by new influenza viruses that have adapted to humans.” (The World Health Organization)

The current threat has been generated by incidences of the H5N1 virus strain seen throughout Asia and Europe. One of the biggest concerns about this strain is its ability to infect a wide range of hosts, including birds and humans. Data indicate that most people will have no immunity to this pandemic virus. As a consequence, international health authorities are pointing to the strong possibility that infection and illness rates will likely be much higher than during seasonal epidemics of normal influenza.

For more information and resources on the Avian Flu virus and possible pandemic, please consult these university resources and other government agency sites:

<http://www.health.umd.edu/services/avianflu.html>

<http://flu.maryland.gov/>

[http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/)

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>

## Why does the university need to prepare for it?

Communities need to prepare for a pandemic because if a human-to-human transmission is identified, it has the potential to spread very quickly. An outbreak of this strain of the flu could significantly interrupt normal university functions for a period of two to four weeks or up to several months, and may require closure of on-campus housing and university operations. The university community is taking aggressive steps now to prepare for the potential of such a pandemic in the best interest of minimizing the risk of exposure among faculty, staff and students.

## What can you do to avoid exposure?

Avoid being around others who are at risk for exposure. As a pandemic emerges, do not kiss, hug, shake hands or come in close contact with others, particularly in large gatherings. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially if you suspect that you may have been exposed. Check your temperature regularly for several days after you suspect possible exposure and, should your temperature rise, see a physician immediately.

## What will the university do in the event of a pandemic?

Should an outbreak occur, the university will begin to activate its emergency response plan. Steps will be taken to: (a) help faculty and students get home safely before national and international travel restrictions begin; (b) maintain a reduced level of key campus operations through remote or online interaction; (c) implement on-campus wages and other payments through direct deposit and other electronic means; and (d) communicate contingencies if phone or internet access becomes bogged down as a result of increased activity. Finally, and once the outbreak has been controlled, the university will begin its recovery process.

The University of Maryland Avian Flu Pandemic Response Plan will be activated in several escalating levels (visit [www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/pandemic\\_flu/](http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/pandemic_flu/) for details):

- **Level 1:** First cases of efficient human-to-human transmission internationally - Campus stays open, business as usual, enhanced planning. All operations will continue as usual, including classes and research, but more specific steps will be taken to prepare for Level 2. Communication with the campus community will increase to keep everyone informed of plans being implemented.
- **Level 2:** First verified case in North America AND one or more other triggering events (see list on top of page 3) - Social distancing measures will be adopted, steps will be taken to eliminate large gatherings, including the cancellation of classes and all other scheduled activities. Health and Counseling Center staffs will begin to implement emergency response procedures. Administrative departments, student service units and all academic programs will begin preparation for shutting down.

*The criteria or events that will trigger moving to Level 2 include (a) the World Health Organization declaration of Phase 6 in the pandemic period, reflecting an increased and sustained transmission in the general U.S. population, (b) confirmation of a high rate of infectivity, morbidity (rate of infection) and/or mortality (death rate), (c) rate/speed of disease spreading, (d) local public health recommendation to curtail/cancel public activities in county or state, (e) falling class attendance and student leaving campus, (f) rising employee absenteeism, (g) other regional schools and school systems closing, (h) transportation systems closing or curtailing interstate travel and (i) cases in the local Mid-Atlantic area occurring early versus late in the overall U.S. experience with the unfolding pandemic.*

- **Level 3:** Within 1-5 days of declaring Level 2 and depending on national and local conditions – All university residences will close; thereafter, as soon as practical, most administrative offices and academic buildings will close. Dining operations will be reduced to support only an emergency infirmary. All research operations, except those with critical facility needs (e.g., animal care) will be interrupted until the pandemic period has passed. All administrative and academic support units will be shut down until the campus reopens.
- **Level 4:** As soon as practical following Level 3 – Campus closed. An emergency condition has been declared and the campus has been evacuated. All facilities have closed except skeletal services for the infirmary, temporary emergency shelter housing for students with extreme hardships, and essential research. Access to campus has been sealed off for vehicles and pedestrians (except for essential employees for tasks related to securing and maintaining the campus and its facilities), and closure is sustained. All service contracts and construction projects will be suspended.
- **Recovery level:** Once the pandemic is under control – Campus poised to reopen. Once the danger of the Avian Flu pandemic has passed, the campus will reopen for business. As services return to normal, accommodations for concerns that arose as part of the period of closure will be addressed.

# What You Can Do Now to Prepare

## Make Your Emergency Plan Now

Your ability to stay healthy and to respond effectively will depend in part on your advance planning. If a pandemic occurs, the university may have to evacuate for some period of time. To make sure you are ready to respond, think through your personal emergency plan and address the following considerations:

*If you live on or near campus and have to travel some distance to your permanent residence, what are your primary travel plans? Do you have a contingency?*

- If you plan to travel by air or rail, do you have your travel agency or airline reservation information handy? Have you familiarized yourself with plans by university departments, including Public Safety and Transportation Services, to arrange pick-up sites for shuttles to take you to public transportation destinations? Check [www.transportation.umd.edu](http://www.transportation.umd.edu) for the most updated information.
- If you plan to drive, do you have at least one alternate route?
- If you will be picked up, do you have contact information ready?
- If you cannot get home, is there a friend or loved one who lives nearby who would agree to let you stay during a campus closure (for what could be an extended stay)?
- If you live in a university residence hall or chapter house, ask your RA or house director what the procedure for evacuation might be. Check the websites for Fraternity and Sorority Life ([www.greek.umd.edu](http://www.greek.umd.edu)) and Resident Life ([www.resnet.umd.edu](http://www.resnet.umd.edu)) for the most updated information.
- If you live in off-campus housing, check with your manager or landlord for what the evacuation procedure might be.

*If you commute and an evacuation is ordered, do you have at least one alternative commuter route?*

- Familiarize yourself with local resources for traffic updates and road conditions, including <http://www.wtopnews.com>.

*What should you do if your on-campus classes are interrupted, but your academic activities continue remotely, through email or other communications? Prepare to have the following at home:*

- Books and transportable, (non-hazardous, non-secure) research materials.
- Laptop and portable technology devices.
- Syllabi for your classes, including faculty and other student contact information.
- Individual course plans in the event of a campus evacuation.
- Email access and on-line learning options. For more information, check: [www.helpdesk.umd.edu/pandemic](http://www.helpdesk.umd.edu/pandemic).

## **Other Important Considerations**

*Have you arranged for direct deposit?*

In the event of a campus closure, any earnings you are scheduled to receive will only be issued electronically. Checks cannot be issued until the university reopens.

- If you do not have a bank checking account, create one.
- To arrange for direct deposit of your paycheck to your bank account, contact your department Payroll Coordinator to complete the direct deposit request form or you may get a copy of this form online at: <http://compnet.comp.state.md.us/cpb>.

*Will the university be able to reach you once you have evacuated?*

The university may need to rely on phone and internet communications to remain in touch with you during a pandemic. Please make sure your contact information is up to date (both email and phone) for students in the Student Information System, at <http://www.testudo.umd.edu/apps/saddr/>.

*Do you have a personal emergency kit?*

As a result of social distancing, evacuation, closures, and travel restrictions, it is a good idea to anticipate what personal items you will need to take and keep with you in the event of a pandemic.

- Food and water: Preparation experts recommend at least a two-week supply of non-perishable items, so that you do not need to go to the store very often.

- Medications: Fill prescriptions and have over-the-counter items in supply.
- Health and hygiene items: tissues, toilet paper, anti-bacterial (waterless) gel, soap, disinfecting cleaning solution, trash bags.
- Practical items: flashlight, portable radio with batteries, manual can opener.
- Contact information: Have phone and email contact information for loved ones, as well as a previously identified third-party contact, in the event that you cannot reach a loved one directly.

### **Stay Tuned...**

As the university plans are finalized, you should watch for more information on the university home page, [www.umd.edu](http://www.umd.edu), as well as on email and in the Diamondback. Lastly, try not to be overly concerned. The information we share and the preparations we make are intended for more effective response to something we hope will never happen. If it does, you will be ready and know what to expect.

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