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The Flight Of The Flu

By Carl Hampton

Even though there have been computer simulations that suggest the link between the flu and traveling, there has never really been a study proving that until recently.

Airline travel is one of the easiest ways to catch and spread influenza - a contagious disease that effects your respiratory system. So the question then arises about flight restrictions and if they can control the pandemic - the spread of a disease over a large area. This study was published in PloS Medicine and it provides actual observations of this problem.

Researchers have compared the timing and the number of influenza deaths in 122 American cities with the volume of airline travel during each flu seasons throughout nine years (from 1996 to 2005). They found that changes in the rate of deaths every year are consistent with monthly airline travel. November shows a high increase in influenza infections and late February is when the death rate hits its peak. So the suggestion is that the Thanksgiving holiday travel can be the main factor in the speed of the spread of influenza.

The study proved that the fewer domestic airline passengers there are, the slower the flu moves across the country. This effect was especially present after the September 11 attacks, when a temporary flight ban was placed within the United States and airline travel was lower than in any other season from 1995 to 2005.

Is there really anything the airlines can do to help with this situation? The need for speed between flights limits the cleaning that can be done. Once on the airplane, we are dependent on the air conditioning working correctly and filtering all the germs it pulls in before it recycles the air again. The airlines are in the business of selling seats, so can we really ask them to start checking travelers for health problems.

For most of us, the need to get somewhere will outweigh the risk of catching the flu.

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Bird Flu: A Few Facts

By Dylan Miles

What is bird flu? What do you need to know about it? How does it affect you? Accurate and detailed information is available freely from medical professionals and on the Internet. As a brief introduction, below are some basic facts about bird flu.

1. What is bird flu?

Avian influenza, or bird flu, is a contagious disease that affects chickens, ducks, turkeys, and other birds. Bird flu was first detected over 100 years ago and nowadays comes in a variety of about 20 strains. Most recently, outbreaks of the viral disease have been caused by the H5N1 strain, which is a particularly deadly strain of the virus.

2. Can I be infected with bird flu?

The H5N1 strain of the flu, also called the Asian bird flu because it recently was detected in Asia, has a small risk level for human beings because it cannot be transmitted from one human being to another. A human being can only be infected from direct contact with a sick animal. It is possible that this could change and that the strain could evolve into a virus that can be transferred from one human to another. But this is not the case now.

3. Is there a treatment for bird flu?

Professionals currently researching the Avian bird flu claim that rimantidine and amantidine, two cheap and popular flu drugs, have no power over the bird flu, but Relenza and Tamiflu, two other flu drugs, can indeed effectively treat the viral disease.

4. Is there a risk of a bird flu epidemic?

Experts in this area suggest that rapid and extensive culling and quarantining of potentially infected animals is the best way to prevent an epidemic. Another option is vaccination of birds against the bird flu virus.

Dylan Miles, journalist, and website builder, lives in Texas. He is the owner and co–editor of

<http://www.immunbirdflu.info>

on which you will find a longer, more detailed version of this article.



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