

# Psittacosis

## Fact Sheet



### What is Psittacosis?

It is a type of lung infection caused by bacteria called *Chlamydia psittaci*. The disease is also known as Ornithosis or Parrot Fever.

### Who can get it?

Persons or birds exposed to birds that are infected with or carrying the bacteria can get infected. Parrot-type birds are the most often infected. Pigeons and doves, turkeys, chickens, and ducks can sometimes get the disease. It can be a risk for pet owners, pet shop employees, veterinary clinic staff, poultry farmers, and slaughterhouse workers.

### What are the symptoms?

Early symptoms include abrupt onset of fever, sore throat, headache, swollen glands, and muscle and joint pains. Later there may be more severe illness with pneumonia, dry cough, and trouble breathing.

Occasionally other organ systems such as the heart or liver may be affected.

Individuals can become ill 5 to 14 days after exposure to infected birds, but longer periods have been reported.

### How is it spread?

Birds transmit the infection through their feces and nasal discharge. Some infected birds may have no symptoms. People usually become infected after exposure to infected birds or bird droppings. However, some patients reported no exposure to birds.

Person to person spread is rare. People that are infected with this do not need to be isolated. Contacts do not need antibiotics.

### How will I know if I have this disease?

Your doctor will order special lab tests to check for this illness. Be sure to mention that

you have had contact with birds at home or at work.

### What is the treatment?

Antibiotics are used to treat this illness. Your doctor will decide which medicine is best for you.

### How do I protect my family and myself?

Isolate new birds to your flock or home from all other birds for 30 days and observe for illness. Isolate and treat ill birds according to the veterinarian's plan.

Wear protective clothing such as gloves and masks when handling, feeding, or cleaning cages of infected birds. Use wet cleaning methods (rather than sweeping or vacuuming) and disinfection when cleaning waste material.

### Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov>) and the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (<http://www.nasphv.org>) websites are excellent sources of health information.