

Letter Concerning International Travel

Dear Members of the Bridgewater State College Community,

If you are planning to travel abroad, BSC Health Services encourages you to take precautions against seasonal influenza by getting the flu vaccine. Vaccines can be administered by injection or by an intranasal spray called FluMist. More travel advice can be found online at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) and the World Health Organization (www.who.int).

In addition to flu vaccine, it is always prudent to follow good hygiene practices to protect yourself from viral infections. These practices include:

- Washing your hands frequently and not touching your eyes, nose, or mouth after coming in contact with objects such as keyboards and door knobs.
- Encouraging others to cover their mouths when sneezing or coughing, to use tissues, and dispose of them properly.

Given the heightened awareness of the avian influenza Type H5N1, also known as the “bird flu,” BSC Health Service offers the following tips for those who may be traveling to areas where cases of the avian flu have been reported. Confirmed cases of bird-to-human transmission have been reported in several countries, including China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

- Avoid contact with poultry (chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons, turkeys, and quail) or any wild birds.
- Do not eat uncooked or undercooked poultry or poultry products.
- Discuss antiviral medication with your health care provider before departing the United States.

Finally, if you believe you may have been exposed during your travel to influenza, including avian influenza, during your travel, please follow these important steps:

- Monitor your health for at least 10 days.
- If, at any point during this period, you become ill with fever and develop a cough, sore throat, or difficulty breathing, or if you develop any illness with fever, consult a health care provider.
- ***Before you visit BSC Health Services or any health care provider, call the provider's office and tell the provider the following: your symptoms, where you traveled, and if you have had direct contact with poultry.***
- Travel only if you are seeking medical care. Limiting contact with others as much as possible can help prevent the spread of an infectious illness.

If you have any questions, please contact BSC Health Service by calling (508)531-1252.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Frias
Senior Director
Bridgewater State College Health Services