

# Psittacosis

## What is Psittacosis?

Psittacosis is an infectious disease usually transmitted to humans from birds in the parrot family, turkeys and pigeons. It is caused by bacteria called *Chlamydia psittaci*.

## Who gets Psittacosis?

Since this disease is spread by birds in the parrot family, it is occasionally found in pet store workers and people who have recently purchased an infected bird. It may also be found in farmers and slaughterhouse workers who process turkeys.

## How is Psittacosis spread?

Psittacosis is usually spread by inhaling dust from dried droppings from bird cages and by handling infected birds in slaughterhouses. Human to human spread has not been reported. Waste material in the bird cage may remain infectious for weeks.

## What are the symptoms of Psittacosis?

Symptoms include fever, headache, rash, myalgia (e.g. muscle pain), upper or lower respiratory tract disease, chills and sometimes pneumonia.

## How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

The incubation period may range from 4 to 15 days or longer, but is usually 10 days.

## How is Psittacosis diagnosed?

The diagnosis can be made by special blood antibody tests.

*This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.*

For further information contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318  
or toll free 1-888-294-6630, ext. 8318.

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