

Bird flu virus mutations found in Turkey

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Mutations of the bird flu virus have reportedly been found in a flu patient in Turkey but it's not yet known if the mutated virus might cause a human pandemic.

The journal Nature reported the discovery of the virus last week and the World Health Organization said it is monitoring the situation.

"It's one isolate from a single virus from Turkey," WHO spokeswoman Maria Cheng said in Geneva, USA Today reported Monday. One mutation found "suggests the virus might be more inclined to bind to human cells rather than animal cells," Cheng said. "If we started to see a lot more samples from Turkey with this mutation and saw the virus changing, we'd be more concerned."

The avian flu virus was detected in Turkish poultry flocks in October, the newspaper said. On Jan. 5 the Turkish Ministry of Health said two teenagers, a brother and sister, had died from the disease. They were the first human cases involving bird flu to be reported outside eastern Asia.

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