# Psittacosis

Psittacosis is an uncommon illness. It is caused by a germ called Chlamydia psittaci. The germ is carried by birds. Bird owners, pet shop employees and veterinarians are most often affected. Outbreaks of psittacosis in poultry processing plants have been reported. The infection is spread by breathing in dried secretions from infected birds. The incubation period is 5 to 19 days. This means you get sick that length of time after exposure. All birds are susceptible. Pet birds (parrots, parakeets, macaws, and cockatiels) and poultry (turkeys and ducks) most often pass this illness to people. Usually the birds that give this to people are not sick.

## SYMPTOMS

The illness causes:

- Fever.
- Chills.
- Headache.
- Muscle aches.
- Fatigue.
- Shortness of breath.
- Dry cough.

Other problems may include:

- Inflammation of the heart and liver.
- Brain and spinal cord (*neurologic*) problems.
- Severe pneumonia requiring intensive-care support. It rarely causes death.

## DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver may suspect what is wrong by taking your history and doing a physical exam. X-rays may show pneumonia. Blood work may be done.

## TREATMENT

Your caregiver can usually easily treat psittacosis with antibiotics.

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