

Egypt toddler contracts bird flu

March 28 2009

A two-year-old Egyptian girl has contracted bird flu, the 60th reported case since the first outbreak of the disease in the country in 2006, a health ministry spokesman said on Saturday.

The toddler has been taken to hospital and is in stable condition, said ministry spokesman Abdel Rahman Shahin.

Twenty-three people have died of [bird flu](#) in [Egypt](#). Most of the victims have been young girls or women, who are generally in charge of looking after poultry in rural areas.

Shahin said the percentage of fatalities from bird flu in Egypt is less than in other countries that have seen outbreaks of the disease.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) called earlier this month for an investigation into why many of the victims have been young children.

Egypt hosted an international conference on bird flu in October, when Washington pledged an additional 320 million dollars to the fight against the disease amid fears it may yet escalate into a global pandemic.

The H5N1 strain of the virus that is most dangerous to humans first emerged in Asia in 2003 and has since caused nearly 250 deaths, according to WHO figures.

Scientists fear that a mutation of the [bird flu virus](#) resulting in a strain easily transmitted among humans could create a pandemic, potentially

affecting up to one-fifth of the world's population.

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