

Q & A for Parents about Enterovirus D-68

There have been many reports recently on television about Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68), suspected to be the cause of the increase in respiratory illnesses in Missouri and Illinois children since the middle of August. There are several other states investigating groups of children with severe respiratory illness, possibly caused by EV-D68.

The Pediatric Infectious Disease doctors at 'Specially for Children have reviewed information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and provided answers to commonly asked questions about this respiratory virus.

Q: What is Enterovirus D68?

A: Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) is one of many enteroviruses. While some enteroviruses are common, this one has not been seen frequently in the United States. As of September 10, 2014, many children have become ill and 84 people in six states have been confirmed to have respiratory illness caused by EV-D68. There have been no reported cases in Texas during this time period.

Q: How would a child with this infection show signs of illness?

A: EV-D68 can cause varying degrees of respiratory illness.

- Many commonly seen symptoms are cough, difficulty breathing and/or rapid breathing, congestion and wheezing.
- ***If your child quickly develops cough, wheezing or difficulty breathing, please contact your doctor. A visit to a clinic or hospital might be necessary.***
- Other symptoms might be runny nose, loss of appetite, vomiting, body and muscle aches. Fever is uncommon.
- Symptoms may be more severe in children with asthma.

Q: How does the virus spread?

A: Since EV-D68 causes respiratory illness, the virus can be found in respiratory secretions, such as saliva, nasal drainage, or mucus from coughing. EV-D68 likely spreads from person to person when someone touches a contaminated surface that an infected person touches or coughs or sneezes onto and then touches his eyes, nose or mouth without washing his hands.

Q: Who does this virus affect?

A: Like other enteroviruses, anyone can get infected with EV-D68. Among the recent EV-D68 infections in some states, children with asthma seemed to have a higher risk for severe respiratory illness. However, this is still being investigated

Q: How is illness caused by Enterovirus D68 diagnosed?

A: State health departments and the CDC can test for this virus. However, doctors don't need to test for Enterovirus D68 to be able to take care of a child who is sick from this virus.

Q: Is there an antibiotic or vaccine to prevent illness from EV-D68?

A: Since EV-D68 is a virus, antibiotics will not help. There are also no antiviral medications to treat people with respiratory illness caused by EV-D68 and no vaccine to prevent it. For mild respiratory illness like body aches and fever, you can help relieve symptoms by giving your child over-the-counter medications made for children. If your child has asthma, the illness may be more severe and you should call your doctor or clinic.

If your child has difficulty breathing, take him/her to the emergency room.

Q: How can I protect myself?

A: You can help protect yourself from respiratory illnesses by following these steps:

- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with tissues.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are sick.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.

Since people with asthma are higher risk for respiratory illnesses, they should regularly take medicines and maintain control of their illness during this time. They should also take advantage of influenza vaccine since people with asthma have a difficult time with respiratory illnesses.