



## Enteroviruses and Enterovirus D68

### *Disease Fact Sheet*

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#### **What are enteroviruses?**

Enteroviruses are very common viruses; there are more than 100 different types. Approximately 10-15 million enterovirus infections occur in the United States each year. Most infected people have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, but some infections can be serious. Infants, children, and teenagers are more likely than adults to get infected with enteroviruses and become sick. Most enterovirus infections in the United States occur seasonally during the summer and fall. Enteroviruses can cause respiratory illness, febrile rash, and neurologic illnesses, such as aseptic meningitis (swelling of the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain).

#### **How are enteroviruses spread?**

Enteroviruses can be spread by close contact with an infected person who may cough or sneeze on you, by contaminating hands with stool, and by touching objects or surfaces that have the virus on them and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

#### **What is Enterovirus D68?**

Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) is one of many enteroviruses. EV-D68 is not a new virus. It was first identified in California during 1962. EV-D68 infections likely occur less commonly than infections caused by other enteroviruses. Compared with other enteroviruses, EV-D68 infection has rarely been identified in the United States.

#### **What are EV-D68 symptoms?**

EV-D68 usually can cause mild to severe respiratory illness. Most people who get infected are infants, children and teens. Most start with common cold symptoms of runny nose and cough. Some, but not all, may also have fever. Infected individuals generally recover without complications by treating symptoms. However, some individuals, particularly those with weakened immune systems or underlying medical conditions such as asthma, may experience severe illness and require hospitalization with supportive therapy. For more severe cases, difficulty breathing, problems with catching breath or wheezing may occur.

#### **What do I do if my child has these symptoms?**

1. If symptoms are mild, such as with the common cold, parents should do what they normally do: increase fluids, ensure rest, keep the child home from school, and give fever- and pain-reducing medicines, as needed.
2. If symptoms worsen or do not get better within a week, or if new wheezing begins, contact your child's health care provider.
3. If at any time your child is having difficulty breathing, has blue lips, or is gasping for air, you should seek immediate medical care.

#### **How are EV-D68 infections treated?**

There is no specific treatment for EV-D68 infections. Many infections will be mild and self-limited, requiring only treatment of the symptoms, such as increasing fluids, resting and taking fever-reducing medicine. Some people with severe respiratory illness caused by EV-D68 may need to be hospitalized and receive supportive therapy, such as with oxygen and nebulization (treatment by inhaling medication through vapor). There are no anti-viral medications or vaccines currently available for EV-D68 treatment or prevention.



### **How do I prevent enterovirus infections?**

There are no vaccines for preventing EV-D68 infections. You can help protect yourself from respiratory illnesses by following these steps:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds to help prevent transmission of communicable diseases.
- If you do not have access to a sink, alcohol hand sanitizers are a good alternative, as long as hands are not visibly soiled.
- Alcohol hand sanitizers are less effective against certain viruses such as norovirus and enteroviruses. If there are confirmed cases of these illnesses in households, use soap and water as the preferred way to wash hands.
- 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 (for example, using an EPA-registered disinfectant), such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick. (EV-D68 does not live long outside the body. Once a surface is dry, it likely does not contain live virus.)
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- As always, stay home if you are sick.
- Since people with asthma are at higher risk for respiratory illnesses, they should maintain control of their asthma during this time. Asthma can also be controlled by avoiding the triggers that can cause an attack, such as tobacco smoke.

### **How do I know if my child has enterovirus D68 or another respiratory illness?**

During fall and winter seasons, many different viruses circulate in the community. Some of the viruses that can cause symptoms similar to enterovirus symptoms include respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza (flu).

RSV is a respiratory virus that infects the lungs and breathing passages. Most people recover from RSV infection in one to two weeks. However, infection can be severe in some people, such as infants, young children, older adults, and people with certain health conditions. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung) and pneumonia in children younger than 1 year of age in the United States. RSV is also now being recognized as an important cause of respiratory illness in older adults.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of flu infection can result in hospitalization or death. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious complications from the flu. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated each year.