

## **Enteroviruses and Enterovirus D68**

### **What is an enterovirus?**

Enteroviruses are very common viruses; there are more than 100 types. It is estimated that 10 to 15 million people get enterovirus infections in the United States each year.

Most enterovirus infections in the United States occur during the late summer and fall. Most people infected with enteroviruses have only mild symptoms, like a common cold, or none at all, but some infections can be serious.

### **What is enterovirus D68?**

Although enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) is not a new virus, it is less common than other enteroviruses. Compared with other enteroviruses, EV-D68 has been rarely reported in the United States for the last 40 years, and was first isolated in 1962.

Lab testing has confirmed cases of EV-D68 in children in many states, starting with states in the Midwest. The CDC is working with local and state health departments to monitor and track other possible clusters of this virus.

EV-D68 can cause serious respiratory symptoms. It can be particularly serious for children with asthma or other conditions that make breathing difficult. For these children, EV-D68 infections can result in hospitalization.

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

The virus can cause symptoms similar to a cold. In some cases, symptoms can go beyond coughing and congestion to difficulty breathing or wheezing.

### **How is the EV-D68 virus spread?**

Like other enteroviruses, EV-D68 appears to spread through contact with respiratory secretions (from coughs or sneezes) of infected people.

### **Who is at risk?**

Anyone can become infected with enteroviruses. Many people infected will have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, like the common cold. According to the CDC, infants, children, and teenagers, who do not yet have immunity from previous exposures to the virus, are more likely to have serious illness. Infants and people with weakened immune systems have a greater chance of having complications.

## **Important information for children with asthma:**

Children who have previously been diagnosed with asthma should follow their asthma action plans and communicate with their health care provider regarding yellow and red zone instructions. More than half of the children with lab-confirmed EV-D68 in 2014 have a history of asthma or wheezing, according to the CDC. It's important for children with asthma to have their asthma be well-treated and controlled.

Although no children should be exposed to secondhand smoke, it's important to prohibit smoking in homes where children with asthma live.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

Usually, it is not necessary to do a laboratory test for symptoms of a common cold because it would not change the treatment. Many hospitals and some doctor's offices can test ill patients to see if they have enterovirus infection. However, most cannot do specific testing to determine the type of enterovirus, like EV-D68. Some state health departments and CDC can do this sort of testing.

CDC recommends that clinicians only consider EV-D68 testing for patients with severe respiratory illness and when the cause is unclear.

Respiratory illnesses can be caused by many different viruses and have similar symptoms. Not all respiratory illnesses occurring now are due to EV-D68. Anyone with respiratory illness should contact their doctor if they are having difficulty breathing, or if their symptoms are getting worse.

## **How is EV-D68 treated?**

Many infections are mild. They require only medication taken for personal comfort. People with severe difficulty breathing may need to be hospitalized and may receive intensive supportive therapy. No medications are currently available for treating EV-D68 infections.

## **What can be done to avoid getting an EV-D68 infection?**

There are currently no vaccines for preventing EV-D68 infections. Do the following to reduce the risk of getting infected with EV-D68:

- Children and adults with asthma should be sure to have their asthma symptoms under control, and see a healthcare provider if they develop a respiratory infection and their asthma symptoms worsen.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers.
- Avoid touching your 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.
- If you are ill, do not go to daycare, school or work.

Information sources:  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington State Department of Health