

Questions and Answers

Respiratory Illness Due to Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68)

What is the current situation?

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH), several Ohio local health departments, and hospitals are assessing increases in severe respiratory illness among children to determine if it may be attributable to infections with Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68). While Ohio does not have any positive tests for EV-D68, ODH is arranging for specimens to be tested at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Updates will be sent as more information and guidance become available.

What are enteroviruses?

Enteroviruses are very common viruses. There are more than 100 types of enteroviruses. It is estimated that 10 to 15 million enterovirus infections occur in the U.S. each year. Most people infected with enteroviruses have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, but some infections can be serious. Infants, children and teenagers are most likely to get infected with enteroviruses and become sick. This is because they do not yet have immunity from previous exposures to these viruses. Most enterovirus infections in the U.S. occur seasonally during the summer and fall, and outbreaks often tend to occur in several-year cycles.

What is Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68)?

Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) is a type of enterovirus that was first detected in California in 1962 in children with respiratory illness. EV-D68 infections appear to occur less commonly than other types of enteroviruses and EV-D68 infections have been reported rarely.

No data are currently available regarding the number of individuals becoming ill from EV-D68 infection in the U.S. Outbreaks of respiratory illness associated with EV-D68 have been investigated in Asia, Europe, and the U.S. during the past few years.

What are the symptoms of Enterovirus D68 infection?

EV-D68 usually can cause mild to severe respiratory illness, with some severe illnesses requiring hospitalization in intensive care units. Symptoms have included fever, difficulty breathing, and wheezing or asthma exacerbation. However, the full spectrum of EV-D68 illness is not well-defined.

How is Enterovirus D68 infection diagnosed?

Special laboratory tests are required to diagnose EV-D68. The Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Public Health Laboratory will facilitate specimen shipment to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Facilities should contact their local health department. Local health departments should contact the Bureau of Infectious Diseases at (614) 995-5599.

How is Enterovirus D68 infection treated?

There is no specific treatment for EV-D68 infections as no anti-viral medications are currently available for this purpose. Many infections will be mild and self-limited, requiring only symptomatic treatment. Some people with severe respiratory illness caused by EV-D68 may need to be hospitalized and receive intensive supportive therapy.

How is Enterovirus D68 transmitted?

- Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68), like other enteroviruses, appears to spread through close contact with infected people. It is also possible for virus transmission to happen on frequently touched surfaces.

What precautions can people take to reduce the risk of acquiring, or transmitting, EV-D68 and other enterovirus infections?

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers - fecal-oral route of transmission is possible since the virus first replicates in the intestinal track.
- 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;
- Stay home when feeling sick, and as needed consult with your healthcare provider.

Is there a vaccine for Enterovirus D68?

No vaccine is available.

Is Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) a reportable disease in Ohio?

Healthcare providers are not required to report known or suspected cases of EV-D68 to public health authorities. However, healthcare providers should report clusters or outbreaks of unexplained respiratory illnesses to their local health department.