

# ENTEROVIRUS INFORMATION

## IMPORTANT HEALTH NOTICE FOR SCHOOLS

### Information on Enterovirus D68

There have been some recent media reports concerning Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68). This virus has been detected in specimens from children with severe illness in 18 states, including Pennsylvania. In southwestern PA there has been a recent increase in emergency department visits for respiratory illness in children. There is no specific treatment or vaccine for EV-D68 infections. The virus likely spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or touches contaminated surfaces.

### Steps to protect school staff and students from respiratory illnesses

There are no national or state recommendations for any special precaution to prevent EV-D68 other than the usual measures for preventing respiratory illness (see below). A majority of children with confirmed disease have a history of asthma, so compliance with asthma treatment regimens and heightened watchfulness for wheezing or shortness of breath in this population is advisable.

Below are steps that students and staff can take to prevent transmission of respiratory illness:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching eyes, noses and mouths with unwashed hands
- Avoid kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are ill
- Disinfect frequently commonly touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, with standard bleach solutions, especially when someone is ill
- Ensure children with asthma follow their treatment regimen and contact their healthcare providers if there are any problems.
- Refer students with cold-like symptoms with wheezing or difficulty breathing to parents for medical follow-up. Nurses and administrators should recommend that a child stay home from school if experiencing fever, with exclusion until 24 hours after fever free without fever-reducing medication.
- To protect against influenza, encourage flu vaccination this fall for all staff and students. Vaccination against influenza is recommended yearly for everyone 6 months and older.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ENTEROVIRUS D68 (EV-D68)

### ***What are Enteroviruses?***

- Enteroviruses are very common viruses – there are more than 100 different types.
- Enteroviruses can cause respiratory illness, rashes with fever, and neurologic illness like aseptic meningitis (swelling of the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain).
- Most people with enteroviruses have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, but some infections can be serious.
- Infants, children and teenagers are most likely to become infected with Enteroviruses and become sick.

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

- Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) infections are believed to occur less commonly than other enterovirus infections.
- First identified in California in 1962, EV-D68 has been rarely reported in the United States in comparison with other enteroviruses.
- EV-D68 has been reported to cause mild to severe respiratory illness. Symptoms of mild illness may include fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough, and body and muscle aches.
- Children with severe symptoms may experience difficulty breathing or wheezing.
- Children with asthma are at highest risk of developing severe symptoms.

### ***How does EV-D68 spread?***

- The ways in which EV-D68 spreads are not yet well understood.
- The virus causes respiratory illness and is found in saliva, nasal mucus or sputum (spit).
- The virus likely spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or touches contaminated surfaces.

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

- Diagnosis for EV-D68 is done using specific laboratory tests on swabs from a patient's nose or throat.
- Although doctors and hospitals in Pennsylvania may be able to test for the presence of Enterovirus, they cannot test to determine if an illness is specifically caused by EV-D68.
- Not all respiratory illness occurring now are due to EV-D68, and it is important that patients with respiratory illness be tested for other conditions that may have a specific treatment such as pertussis, influenza, or respiratory syncytial virus.

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

- There is no specific treatment for EV-D68.  
Many infections will be mild and require only treatment of the symptoms.  
Some people with severe respiratory illness caused by EV-D68 may need to be hospitalized.
- No antiviral medications are available for treating EV-D68 infections.

### ***Can EV-D68 be prevented?***

- There are no vaccines for preventing EV-D68 infections.
- You can help protect yourself from EV-D68 – and other respiratory illnesses – by doing the following:
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
  - Cough into your sleeve or a tissue.
  - Avoid kissing, hugging and sharing cups, eating utensils, etc. with people who are sick.
  - Disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.

### ***What is Pennsylvania doing in response to EV-D68?***

- The Pennsylvania Department of Health is monitoring the situation involving EV-D68 very closely. Several confirmed cases of EV-D68 have occurred in a Philadelphia hospital, and we are awaiting the test results of several ill children from other regions of the state.
- Once EV-D68 is detected throughout Pennsylvania, further testing will not be necessary. It is important to remember that testing for EV-D68 will not change the treatment an ill child will receive.

### ***Where can I get more information about EV-D68?***

Visit the Enterovirus section of the CDC's website at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/non-polioenterovirus/about/EV-D68.html>

If you have any other questions, please contact the Allegheny County Health Department at 412-687-2243.