

# ENTEROVIRUS UPDATE

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As widely reported, our area is experiencing the effects of an uncommon strain of respiratory virus: Enterovirus D68. This viral illness was first identified in 1962 and is related to the same virus that causes hand, foot, and mouth disease among other types of viral illness. There is no cure or antibiotics to treat viruses. Our bodies will usually kill the virus within seven to 10 days. At this time, some children have required hospital care.

The signs and symptoms of Enterovirus begin as a common cold and the virus is spread like colds and "flu." There is no way to predict which children will progress to full blown lung infection, so providers watch them closely. It is important to use a humidifier at home, keep children well-hydrated by drinking plenty of clear liquids, and prevention includes avoiding close contact between well and sick persons, good hand-washing, as well as using disinfectant wipes on all surfaces in the home daily.

Children who simply get bad "cold" symptoms from the virus can be easily cared for at home.

Some children will progress to having symptoms very similar to other viruses such as RSV or Influenza. However, what distinguishes the Enterovirus viral pattern from usual cold symptoms is that children can suddenly begin to experience difficulty breathing, as if they are having an asthma attack even if they do not have asthma. Children who DO have asthma will likely develop more severe symptoms and should be closely monitored by parents.

Severe symptoms of the ENT-D68 virus include:

- difficulty breathing in and breathing out
- retracting between the ribs when trying to breath
- having to use additional neck or belly muscles to help them breathe
- a persistent, unrelenting cough, and
- inability to continue playing.
- breathing in and out more than 40 times in a minute.

If a child suddenly begins to exhibit these signs of severe illness, parents should take him or her to the Emergency Room or Primary Care Provider immediately. If the child is blue around the mouth, poorly responsive or seems unable to walk, call 911. And, if the

child has a known diagnosis of asthma, begin to use a home Asthma Action Plan. If parents do not have an updated Asthma Action Plan for 2014, they should see their Primary Care Providers to obtain them.

Again, regular cold symptoms such as stuffy nose, congestion, occasional cough with normal breathing pattern, and normal play and activities can safely be treated at home with nasal saline (artificial tears) to clear out nasal secretions, humidifier, ibuprofen, and plenty of clear liquids. If a child suddenly become ill and has difficulty breathing, he or she needs to be seen by a healthcare provider right away.

[For more information see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpage at <http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/about/EV-D68.html> OR call the Evans Army Community Hospital's, Preventive Medicine Department/Public Health Nursing at (719) 526-2939.]