



Kentucky Public Health Alert

Increased Respiratory Illness Circulating in Kentucky Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68)

The Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) has identified an increase of respiratory illnesses occurring in regions across the state, through reports from local health departments and calls from hospitals with increased admissions for acute respiratory illness, particularly among children. Other states, including Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, have reported similar increases in respiratory illness activity and hospitalizations and are enhancing surveillance. Some Kentucky residents and several individuals in other states have tested positive for human Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68). EV-D68 is not a new virus, and it typically causes upper respiratory illness, such as low-grade fever, cough, runny nose, sneezing and body/muscle aches. Infected individuals generally self-recover without incident by treating symptoms. However, some individuals, especially those with weakened immune systems or underlying medical conditions, such as asthma, may experience severe complications and require hospitalization with supportive therapy.

KDPH encourages health care providers to submit specimens to the KDPH Division of Laboratory Services (DLS) from patients with severe acute respiratory illness in which RSV and influenza tests are negative or those who have tested positive on molecular respiratory pathogen panels for rhinovirus/enterovirus. Nasopharyngeal swabs (NOT nasal swabs or nasal washes) in viral transport media are required for specimen testing. Instructions for submission of nasopharyngeal swabs to DLS for testing are located on the KDPH DLS Webpage at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/info/lab/> under the collection and packaging section, viral kit packaging. For questions regarding lab collection or submission, please contact DLS at 502-564-4446.

Healthcare providers who identify outbreaks or unusual occurrences of acute respiratory illness should contact their local health department or the Kentucky Department for Public Health at 502-564-3261 to determine if specimens should be sent to KDPH DLS for testing. Specimens that are not pre-authorized for shipping to KDPH DLS will not be tested. Afterhours, weekends, or holidays contact 1-888-9REPORT (1-888-973-7678). Specimens should arrive at KDPH DLS Monday through Friday excluding state holidays and should be received within 3 days of the collection date.

Most enterovirus infections in the U.S. occur seasonally during the summer and fall, and outbreaks tend to occur in several-year cycles. Respiratory enteroviruses, including EV-D68 and rhinoviruses, are transmitted through contact with secretions from the eyes, nose, and mouth (saliva, mucus, sputum) of an infected person; having close contact with an infected person, such as touching or shaking hands; and touching objects or surfaces that have been contaminated with infectious secretions. No vaccine is available to prevent infection with respiratory enteroviruses, and no antiviral medication is available.



Health care providers should recommend the following:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact and sharing cups or eating utensils with those who are ill.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, especially if someone is sick.
- Stay home if you are ill.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and discard the used tissue in a waste basket. Wash hands after discarding the tissue. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.
- Consult with your health care provider for further evaluation if children with cold-like symptoms experience difficulty breathing.

If you have any questions regarding the surveillance and epidemiology of EV-D68, please contact T.J. Sugg (tennis.sugg@ky.gov) or Sandy Kelly (sandye.kelly@ky.gov) at the Kentucky Department for Public Health, 502-564-3261.

If you have questions regarding laboratory specimen collection, packaging, and/or shipping; please contact Matthew Johnson (matthew.johnson@ky.gov) or Karim George (karim.george@ky.gov) at KDPH DLS at 502-564-4446.

For more information on non-polio enteroviruses, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Website at <http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus>.