

Scary Symptom Newly Identified With Child Virus

Children across America are flooding into emergency rooms with severe respiratory symptoms, including difficulty breathing, due to an outbreak of Enterovirus-D-68, also known as E-V-D-68. Doctors suspect the virus killed one child, a 4-year-old New Jersey boy, but that has yet to be confirmed.

So far nearly 300 children have been diagnosed with E-V-D-68, and that number is expected to continue to rise. The outbreak has been reported in 44 states.

Now doctors suspect another symptom may be associated with the virus: paralysis.

Nine children admitted to a Colorado hospital are suffering from an inability to adequately move their hands and legs. Four of them tested positive for E-V-D-68. Doctors say they need to know more before definitely linking the paralysis with E-V-D-68, but they suspect that may indeed be the case.

The paralysis is caused by the virus infecting the central nervous system and the spinal cord and causes injury to some of the cells that affect movement. The good news is, doctors say the paralysis is likely temporary, and the children will begin to move normally as their bodies fight the virus.

However, doctors will not rule out the possibility that the paralysis may be permanent in rare cases.

E-V-D-68 is a respiratory virus and usually hits children with asthma the hardest. Most of the children admitted to the hospital with severe E-V-D-68 symptoms are asthmatic or have some other type of chronic respiratory condition.

The virus usually starts like the common cold. Symptoms

include a cough, runny nose and sneezing. If your child has these symptoms, don't worry. They need to stay in bed and get lots of fluids.

The problem comes when these symptoms get worse. Take your child to the doctor right away if he or she has difficulty breathing and begins wheezing.

This virus spreads through close contact, much like the common cold. Parents are advised to teach their children basic hygiene.

The best prevention against bacterial and viral infections is to wash hands thoroughly (lathering for 20 seconds, or the time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice) and use hand sanitizer.

Clean and disinfect surfaces that are often touched, such as door knobs, television remotes and kitchen items. Viruses are more resilient than bacteria and can live on hard surfaces for up to two days.

Hugging, kissing, even shaking hands can spread the virus. Children should be taught not to share glasses and cups as well as silverware, and should avoid touching their mouth, eyes or nose with unwashed hands.

Parents with sick children should keep them home to prevent spreading the virus.

There is no vaccine for E-V-D-68, and no pharmaceutical treatment is available. Antibiotics do not help at all. For children who are hospitalized with severe symptoms of E-V-D-68, health-care workers focus on treating the symptoms, which may involve oxygen therapy. Doctors also concentrate on strengthening the patient's immune system, which can involve giving the child I-V fluids and electrolytes.

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