

Enterovirus (Non-polio)

What is enterovirus?

Enteroviruses are very common viruses; there are more than 100 types. Enteroviruses cause about 10 to 15 million infections in the United States each year. Enterovirus infections are responsible for many illnesses in infants and children. The two most predominant enteroviruses are echovirus and coxsackievirus, but there are several others. Hand foot and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common enterovirus seen in children. Enteroviruses are most common in the summer and fall. Most infected people have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, but sometimes infections can be serious. People infected with enterovirus can have respiratory, rash, neurologic, gastrointestinal and cardiac illness.

Who is at risk?

Infants and children are most at risk. Mothers may transmit the virus to their infants during pregnancy. People with compromised immune systems are also at risk.

What are the symptoms?

Most individuals will have no symptoms or mild symptoms. Symptoms can include fever, body aches, sore throat, and mild to moderate skin rash. Less often these viruses can cause more serious disease involving the heart, brain or spinal cord.

How is it transmitted?

Enterovirus can spread through close contact with feces or mouth or nose secretions or from mother to infant during pregnancy. Enteroviruses can survive on surfaces for long periods of time, allowing transmission by touching objects and then touching the eyes, nose or mouth.

How do you prevent enterovirus?

Since most infected people do not have symptoms or only mild symptoms, it is very important to protect yourself and others by following these tips:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers
- 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 from work or school when you feel sick or have a fever, and obtain consultation from your healthcare provider

What are the treatments?

There is no specific treatment for enterovirus. For mild illness, you can help relieve symptoms by taking over-the-counter medications for pain and fever. Aspirin should not be given to children. Some people with severe respiratory illness may need to be hospitalized. There are no antiviral medications currently available for people who become infected.