

Human Parainfluenza Virus

Information for the Public

What is Human Parainfluenza Virus?

Human parainfluenza viruses (HPIVs) are viruses that commonly cause respiratory illnesses. There are four types of HPIV that commonly circulate at various seasonal times. HPIV-1 and HPIV-2 both may cause croup in children. HPIV-1 is more often detected in the fall of odd numbered years, and HPIV-2 is also usually detected in the fall. HPIV-3 usually arises in spring and early summer and is often associated with bronchiolitis, bronchitis, and pneumonia. HPIV-4 can cause mild to severe respiratory symptoms, but is less common and occurs sporadically.

Who is at risk?

Infants and young children are most at risk, however, anyone can become infected with HPIV. Those with compromised immune systems are also at increased risk.

What are the symptoms?

- Upper respiratory symptoms include fever, runny nose and cough.
- Lower respiratory symptoms may include croup, bronchitis, bronchiolitis, pneumonia.
- Other symptoms may include sore throat, sneezing, wheezing, ear pain, irritability, and decreased appetite.

How is it transmitted?

Parainfluenza virus is spread from person-to-person through the air by coughing and sneezing, close personal contact, or touching infected objects and surfaces, and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. HPIVs can remain on surfaces for a few hours and can remain in the air for over an hour.

How do you prevent human parainfluenza virus?

Prevention begins with washing hands often with soap and water. Avoiding contact with sick people, and refraining from touching your eyes, nose, and mouth also help to spread infection. If you are sick, be sure to stay home from school/work, cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and disinfect surfaces regularly.

What are the treatments?

Currently there is no specific treatment or antivirals available for HPIV, though most people recover on their own. To relieve some of the symptoms of HPIV, take over-the-counter medicines for pain and fever. Aspirin should not be given to children.

Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology

350 Capitol Street, Room 125, Charleston, WV 25301-3715

Phone: (304) 558-5358, extension 1 Fax: (304) 558-6335 www.dide.wv.gov

Answering Service: (304) 925-9946