



Enteroviruses

What are enteroviruses?

Enteroviruses are very common viruses that cause 10 to 15 million illnesses in the U.S. each year. These viruses infect the throat and intestinal tract and cause a variety of illnesses. Most of the time enteroviruses cause only mild illness, if at all. There are more than 100 types of enteroviruses; they are grouped into Coxsackievirus, Echovirus, Enteroviruses, and Rhinovirus. Most enterovirus infections in the U.S. occur seasonally during the summer and fall. Outbreaks tend to occur cyclically, with several-years between.

How do people get infected with enteroviruses?

Enteroviruses can be found in the respiratory fluids (from the nose and throat) and feces of an infected person. You can become infected by direct contact to secretions of an infected person, or by touching objects or surfaces that have the virus on them then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Who can become sick from enteroviruses?

Any person of any age can become infected and sick with enterovirus. However, infants and children are more likely to become sick because they do not have protection from previous exposures to the virus. Infants less than one year are more likely to become severely ill.

What are the symptoms of enteroviruses?

Most people infected do not get sick or have mild symptoms. The mild symptoms may include fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough, skin rash, mouth blisters, and/or muscle aches. Some enterovirus infections can cause viral conjunctivitis or hand, foot, and mouth disease. Most people with enterovirus usually have fever. Occasionally these viruses can cause more serious illness, such as blood infection (sepsis), meningitis, encephalitis, myocarditis (infection of the heart), pericarditis (infection of the sac around the heart), or paralysis.

How soon will you become sick after being exposed to enteroviruses?

People usually develop symptoms of illness in three to five days after exposure.

What is the treatment for enteroviruses?

There is no specific treatment for enterovirus infections. Some medications can help a person feel better. Contact your health care provider for information about medications.

Can you develop immunity from enteroviruses?

You can develop immunity to one virus, but you can still become sick from other enteroviruses.

What should I do if I think I have an enterovirus?

Contact your health care provider if you have symptoms that are not going away or are getting worse.

How can you prevent enteroviruses?

Basic precautions will reduce or even stop the spread of enteroviruses. 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 in the home or classroom or workplace is sick. Stay home when feeling sick, and obtain consultation from your health care provider.