



Texas Children's Hospital®

What you need to know about enterovirus 68

Over the past couple of days, you may have seen or read stories in the media that mention a “mystery respiratory virus” that is affecting the children across the United States. Ten states have confirmed a surge in respiratory infections over the past few weeks and the Midwest has been hit the hardest by the mystery virus, which is actually called enterovirus 68.

Enterovirus 68 is not new. In fact, it's part of a larger family of viruses that likely changed slightly, causing more serious symptoms in children who are not immune to it yet. We aren't sure why the sudden outbreak of the virus has occurred, but it is not surprising that it has coincided with kids' return to school. We tend to see a similar trend in the winter months as cases of influenza increase when students go back to the classroom after winter break.

There is no reason for Houstonians to worry at this point. We have seen no increase at [Texas Children's Hospital](#) or in Houston in the number of respiratory virus infections in children, making it unlikely that this virus has come to Houston. Every day, our team monitors the number of children with respiratory infections in our [Texas Children's Pediatrics](#) practices, emergency centers and critical care units, and we have had no increase in patients with these severe symptoms. If we do notice an increase in the number of cases, we will immediately go into action to figure out what the cause is and respond accordingly.

Additionally, normal cold and flu symptoms can occur in kids all the time and if your child has a run-of-the-mill cold, it is not necessary to take them to the emergency room or rush to the pediatrician's office. If your child has a high fever for more than a couple of days, is having a difficult time keeping down fluids, and particularly if your child is having difficulty breathing, though, you should place a call to your child's doctor to determine whether or not they should be brought in to the office for evaluation.

All viruses are transmitted person-to-person and most commonly through human contact with the hands. Proper hand washing is the most important thing we can do to prevent the spread of the virus. It's not clear whether this virus is transmitted through the air or not, but it could be the reason why we're seeing it spread so quickly. There is no vaccine or particular treatment for enterovirus 68, so the best ways to prevent it from being transmitted is by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth when you cough.

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