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Important Information From the MDPH School Health Unit Re: EV-D68

Schools in a number of states are seeing more children than usual with severe respiratory illness caused by enterovirus D68. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is watching this situation closely and helping the states with testing of specimens. Here are some facts and guidance related to the potential for us to see cases of enterovirus D68 in our schools.

Enteroviruses cause respiratory and gastrointestinal illness, rash, and neurologic illnesses, such as aseptic meningitis and encephalitis. While most infections cause mild or no symptoms, some can be severe. There are over 100 types reported which cause approximately 10 to 15 million infections in the United States each year. They typically occur in the summer and fall.

In August 2014, enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) was identified in children ill with severe respiratory illness in Kansas City, Missouri and Chicago, Illinois. EV-D68 was first identified in California in 1962, but had been reported only rarely in the US in the last 40 years. To date, no cases EV-D68 have been identified in Massachusetts, but it is likely that cases will be seen here. Other enteroviruses may also circulate at this time of year. EV-D68 and other more common enteroviruses are all capable of causing the full spectrum of clinical presentation that is typical of enterovirus infections, although the current outbreak of EV-D68 has been predominantly associated with respiratory disease and not nervous system infection.

No antiviral medications are currently available for treating of EV-D68 infections. Many infections will be mild and self-limited, requiring only treatment of the symptoms. Some people with severe respiratory illness caused by EV-D68 may need to be hospitalized and receive intensive supportive care. There are no licensed vaccines for protection against enterovirus infection.

Infection control

Soap and water is the most effective method for hand hygiene, as hand sanitizers are less effective against enteroviruses. Standard precautions should be used for suspected and confirmed cases of enterovirus infections, with contact precautions for diapered or incontinent children for the duration of illness and to control institutional outbreaks. Since EV-D68 is similar genetically to rhinovirus and causes similar respiratory symptoms, adding droplet precautions could be considered in the hospital setting. Bleach is recommended for environmental cleaning. (<http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/isolation/isolation2007.pdf>)

Advice for parents and patients

- 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