



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Ohio Experiencing Increase in Respiratory Illnesses** *Awaiting CDC Test Results to Confirm Enterovirus D68*

COLUMBUS, OHIO –Ohio hospitals are experiencing an increase in the number of patients with respiratory illnesses, especially children. This increase may be associated with Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68), which has been confirmed in other states. The Ohio Department of Health has sent hospital specimens to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for testing.

Enteroviruses are common, and there are more than 100 types which cause an estimated 10 million to 15 million infections each year – particularly in infants, children and teenagers. Most of them occur seasonally during summer and fall. Most people infected with enteroviruses have no symptoms or only mild symptoms.

EV-D68 is a less common type of enterovirus and can cause cold-like symptoms and mild to severe upper respiratory illness in some individuals. Infected individuals usually recover on their own. However, some individuals, especially those with weakened immune systems or underlying medical conditions such as asthma, may experience severe complications and require hospitalization with supportive therapy. There is no vaccine for EV-D68 nor any specific treatment or anti-viral medications.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) advises individuals to contact their healthcare provider if they are concerned about their, or their children's, symptoms.

“We definitely won’t be surprised if test results come back from CDC confirming the presence of EV-D68 in Ohio given patient symptoms,” said Dr. Mary DiOrio, ODH State Epidemiologist. “We’re urging Ohioans to take precautions to help prevent the spread of this virus. We also want to bring attention to the importance of optimal asthma control. Some of the children who have gotten ill with this enterovirus have previously been diagnosed with asthma.”

Since individuals with asthma are at higher risk for respiratory illnesses, ODH advises them to take their medications regularly, to get a flu vaccine, and to avoid triggers like tobacco smoke that can cause an asthma attack.

Enteroviruses are transmitted through close contact with an infected person, or by touching objects or surfaces that are contaminated with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose or eyes. To protect you and your family from becoming infected with an enterovirus or other illnesses, remember to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.

EV-D68 is not a nationally notifiable disease nor is it reportable in Ohio.

For more information about this virus and other important health information, please visit our website at [www.odh.ohio.gov](http://www.odh.ohio.gov).

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