

# GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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**William S. McKersie, Ph.D.**  
Superintendent of Schools

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September 22, 2014

Dear Parents:

As the fall and winter months approach, so does the influenza season. Most immediately, we all need to be aware of the viral infection caused by Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68). This letter provides information on how to mitigate the spread of influenza generally and specifics related to Enterovirus D68. Working together—as school professionals and families—we can help our young people be as healthy as possible.

Enterovirus D68 may cause severe respiratory illness in some children and adolescents. Recently the CT Department of Public Health received confirmation from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) of one case of Enterovirus D68 in a Connecticut child. Enterovirus D68 is spread through an infected person's respiratory secretions, such as saliva, nasal mucus, or sputum. It may also be spread through the air or when someone touches a contaminated surface.

In most children, Enterovirus D68 will cause mild symptoms including, fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough and/or body and muscle aches. Among the small number of individuals who become very ill, the typical symptoms entail difficulty with breathing, but they may or may not have a fever or wheezing. Many of the children who became very ill have a history of asthma or wheezing. Please seek medical attention if at any time your child experiences difficulty breathing, wheezing or a decrease in activity.

Since it is not possible to predict what the rate of infection will be in the weeks ahead, we each need to take precautions to minimize the spread of both Enterovirus D68 and flu within our homes, schools and community. Each member of the school community – staff members, students and parents – must consider potential harm to others when making decisions to come (or send a child) to school with early symptoms of an acute illness.

Please help minimize the prevalence and spread of Enterovirus D68, flu and flu-like illness in our community by taking the following steps:

- **Consult with your health care providers** or the Greenwich Department of Health (203-622-3774) regarding flu vaccine for you and your children. The CDC recommends annual influenza vaccination for everyone 6 months and older.
- **Be knowledgeable** regarding Enterovirus D68 and influenza. For current information, see:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio\\_enterovirus/about\\_EV-D68](http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/about_EV-D68)  
and the Greenwich Department of Health  
[http://www.greenwichct.org/Government/Departments/Health\\_Department/](http://www.greenwichct.org/Government/Departments/Health_Department/)
- **Make plans** for childcare in the event that your child becomes ill.
- **Teach your children preventive strategies**, such as avoiding close contact with others; covering their mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing or coughing (or coughing or sneezing into an elbow rather than hand); disposing of used tissue into a wastebasket; frequently washing their hands (or using an alcohol-based sanitizer if hand washing is not feasible); and not touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Keep your children home when they have early symptoms** indicative of illness, including fever, headache, runny nose, extreme fatigue, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches. Individuals may be contagious for at least one day before the onset of symptoms and to up to seven days after getting sick.

- **Consult with your child's physician** should you have questions regarding the prevention and treatment of flu and flu-like illness in your family. See the websites referenced above for flu symptoms that should be reported immediately to your child's physician.
- **Keep your children home until they are fully recovered** from the illness (e.g., have had no fever, vomiting or diarrhea for *at least 24 hours*; are no longer significantly fatigued or in need of extra sleep; and have significantly reduced respiratory symptoms). A normal temperature in the morning does not indicate the end of fever or illness. It is not unusual for fever to be absent in the early morning hours but appear (or reappear) in the afternoon or evening hours. A minimum of a full 24 hours of normal temperature – without Tylenol or other fever-reducing medication – is essential before a child returns to school. **Recovery from the acute phase of the illness may require seven or more days of rest and care at home**; full recuperation may take two weeks or more.
- **Never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms – and particularly fever** – without first speaking to your doctor because of the risk of Reye's syndrome, a rare but potentially fatal disease.

If parents and staff members follow these guidelines—and collaborate in teaching children effective prevention strategies—we will succeed in decreasing the spread of flu and other illnesses within the school community. In turn, we will succeed in protecting some of our more vulnerable community members.

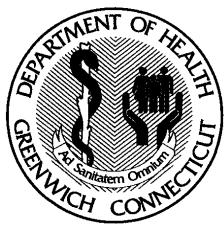
Thank you in advance for your partnership in promoting the health and well-being of our students and staff this year.

Sincerely,



William S. McKersie, Ph.D.  
Superintendent  
Greenwich Public Schools

/attachments



# NEWS RELEASE

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

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**September 19, 2014**  
**For Immediate Release**

## ENTEROVIRUS D68 (EV-D68)

[Greenwich, CT] — According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Connecticut is among 18 states with confirmation of Enterovirus D68, a severe respiratory illness among young children. According to state health officials, the CDC confirmed a case of Enterovirus D-68 infection (EV-D68) involving a Connecticut child who was hospitalized but recovered and was discharged.

Parents and health care providers are advised to be aware of the symptoms associated with this respiratory illness which may include fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough and body and muscle aches. Patients with severe illness caused by EV-D68 experience difficulty breathing and may or may not have fever or wheezing. In addition, many of the children who became very ill with EV-D68 had asthma or a history of wheezing. Like many viruses, enteroviruses are transmitted through close contact with an infected person or by touching objects or surfaces contaminated with the virus. EV-D68 likely spreads from person-to-person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or touches contaminated surfaces. There is no vaccine for preventing EV-D68 infection or specific treatment for people with this respiratory illness other than the management of symptoms.

Protecting yourself against the Enterovirus D-68 involves applying the same precautions used to prevent the spread of influenza:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact (touching, kissing, hugging, sharing cups/eating utensils with people who are sick).
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, etc.

During this time of year in the U.S., other viruses that cause respiratory illness are circulating and not all illnesses occurring now are associated with EV-D68. Enterovirus D-68 can be diagnosed by specific lab tests, but there is no antiviral medication for this infection. A health care provider should be contacted immediately when a child becomes sick with a cold, has difficulty breathing or if symptoms become worse.

Answers to frequently asked questions about Enterovirus EV-D68 are attached.



# FACT SHEET

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

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## ENTEROVIRUS D68: Frequently Asked Questions

The Greenwich Department of Health is advising parents and health care providers to be aware of the signs and symptoms of enterovirus EV-D68 which has been circulating in the United States. The virus, EV-D68, is causing cases of severe respiratory illness among children and other individuals, especially among children with asthma.

To date, the CDC and CT Department of Public Health have confirmed one case of enterovirus D68 infection (EV-D68) involving a Connecticut child. The child, who was recently hospitalized, has since improved and been discharged.

### **Q: What is enterovirus D68?**

#### **Enteroviruses**

- Enteroviruses are very common viruses; there are more than 100 types.
- It is estimated that 10 to 15 million enterovirus infections occur in the United States each year.
- Enteroviruses can cause respiratory illness, febrile rash, and neurologic illnesses, such as aseptic meningitis (swelling of the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain).
- Most infected people have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, but some infections can be serious.
- Infants, children, and teenagers are most likely to get infected with enteroviruses and become sick.
- Most enterovirus infections in the United States occur seasonally during the summer and fall.

#### **Enterovirus D68**

- Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) infections are thought to occur less commonly than infections with other enteroviruses.
- EV-D68 was first identified in California in 1962. Compared with other enteroviruses, EV-D68 has been reported rarely in the United States.

### **Q: Who is at risk?**

**A:** Because they do not yet have immunity (protection) from previous exposures to these viruses, in general, infants, children, and teenagers are most likely to get infected with enteroviruses and become ill.

### **Q: What are the symptoms of EV-D68 infection?**

**A:** EV-D68 can cause mild to severe respiratory illness.

Mild symptoms may include fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough, and body and muscle aches.

- Most of the children who got very ill with EV-D68 had difficulty breathing, and some had wheezing. Many of these children had asthma or a history of wheezing.
- Respiratory illnesses can be caused by many different viruses and have similar symptoms. Not all respiratory illnesses occurring now are due to EV-D68.

- Anyone with respiratory illness should contact their doctor if they are having difficulty breathing, or if their symptoms are getting worse.
- Some people with severe respiratory illness may need to be hospitalized.

**Q: How does the virus spread?**

**A:** Enteroviruses are transmitted through close contact with an infected person, or by touching objects or surfaces contaminated with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes. Since EV-D68 causes respiratory illness, the virus can be found in an infected person's respiratory secretions, such as saliva, nasal mucus, or sputum. EV-D68 likely spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or touches contaminated surfaces

**Q: How is it diagnosed?**

**A:** EV-D68 can only be diagnosed by doing specific lab tests on specimens from a person's nose and throat.

**Q: What are the treatments?**

**A:** There is no specific treatment for people with respiratory illness caused by EV-D68 other than the management of symptoms. For mild respiratory illness, you can help relieve symptoms by taking over-the-counter medications for pain and fever. **Aspirin should not be given to children.** Currently, there are no antiviral medications available for people who become infected with EV-D68.

**Q: How can I protect myself?**

It is important to take steps to protect yourself and others from respiratory infections such as enterovirus. Use the same precautions you would use to prevent the spread of influenza:

- 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.

These prevention steps are especially important for individuals or persons with family members who are infants, or who have chronic health conditions or compromised immune systems.

Since people with asthma are higher risk for respiratory illnesses, they should take medicines regularly and maintain control of their illness during this time. They should also take advantage of influenza vaccine since people with asthma have a difficult time with respiratory illnesses

**Q: Is there a vaccine?**

- There is no vaccine for preventing EV-D68 infections.

It is important to keep in mind that other viruses that cause respiratory illness are circulating in the United States during this time of year. Not all clusters or outbreaks of respiratory illness occurring now are due to EV-D68.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working with health departments in several states to investigate suspected clusters of respiratory illness.

The Greenwich Department of Health will continue to work closely with the CT Department of Public Health (CT DPH) and health care providers to monitor the circulation of the virus in the community, across the state and in the US.

**More information about enterovirus EV-D68 can be found at:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/about/EV-D68.html>