Enterovirus D68

Thursday, September 18, 2014
Sankaran Krishnan, MD, MPH pediatric pulmonologist at Children's and Women's Physicians of Westchester and the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital, answered your questions about enterovirus D68, the illness affecting children.

4:10 Comment From Tierra V
How are the children catching it?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Children are catching the virus from other sick individuals, mostly other children. The virus is transmitted by droplets that are released by coughing/sneezing.

4:10 Comment From Moletos
Should older people, with any health issues that compromise their health, keep a watchful eye?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Yes, absolutely. In general, older folks may have other medical issues that may lead to some weakening of their immune system. They could additionally have respiratory illnesses over years that may have weakened their respiratory defense mechanisms. So, as with other respiratory viruses, like the flu, they should be watchful.
4:11 Comment From Guest
What should I be looking out for

4:11 Comment From Victoria Iannacone, NJ
What exactly happens to the respiratory tract which separates this particular strain from the other
common enteroviruses?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
As per current evidence, this enterovirus is not significantly different from other enteroviruses that
affect the respiratory tract. It is not more "pathogenic". However, why it is spreading more quickly is not
known

4:11 Comment From Guest
Can young adults get the virus-?both of my "early 20yr olds" have slight asthma... Are the susceptible?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Anyone can get the virus. It generally leads to cold like symptoms in most infected people. Younger
children and elderly are likely to have more symptoms as compared to young adults.

4:11 Comment From Donna
My son is 31 and has come down with a very bad cold. Could he get the enterovirus?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
This enterovirus like most other enterovirus can cause cold like symptoms. If he does not have
underlying other problems, he should be OK. If you are concerned, please have him see his physician

4:11 Comment From Bridget
My daughter is 15 with a heart condition and has dejorge syndrome is she more susceptible to this
virus?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Your daughter is as susceptible to this virus as she is to other respiratory viruses at this time of the year.
This virus does not "target" any specific individuals. It is just that if you have underlying health issues
(like your daughter) you could have more symptoms and a more severe course than those with no
underlying conditions. If your daughter gets a cold, and she has symptoms that seem more than just a
cold, have her see her pediatrician

4:12 Comment From Randy
What is enterovirus
4:20 Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Hi,
This is Dr Krishnan. I am a Pediatric Pulmonologist at the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital/ New York Medical College in Valhalla, NY.
Ready to respond to your queries

4:44 Comment From Amy
what states is the virus affecting ? also is it always so severe that it requires hospitalization

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
As of yesterday 14 states have reported this virus, including NY, NJ, CT. This virus typically causes an illness indistinguishable from the common cold. If someone has underlying respiratory disease or immune defects, it could cause more severe illness.

4:44 Comment From Betsy via Facebook
I am worried about this disease because my daughter is an asthmatic and she has such a weak immune system what can I do to prevent from her getting this virus

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
HI Betsy, If your daughter has significant asthma AND a weak immune system, you should be watchful. If she develops symptoms of a cold, you may want to take her to her pediatrician

4:45 Comment From Guest
Hi, I am a certified asthma educator and also severe asthmatic and mom to school age kids with asthma. My question is, I hear all the reports but what exactly is different about this the say the cold or flu. Both those hit asthmatics hard as well. I has many a hospitalization myself due to a bad cold. Also for the sickest of asthmatics were they in lcs or any kind of controller meds at the time.

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Your comments are spot on. This virus, similar to other viruses that affect the respiratory system can cause exacerbations of asthma. This is more so, if you are not on an appropriate asthma action plan which includes an appropriate controller. Asthmatics should consult their physicians so that they are on the right asthma action plan when schools reopen in the fall season. This would go a long way in mitigating symptoms if they happen to contract any viruses including this specific enterovirus.

4:45 Comment From Shari Madsen
Hi my daughter that has Down Syndrome and has had an AV canal repair and still has a lack in her mitral valve. She has had a runny nose and congestion. Should I be worried that it is the virus.

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Hi Shari, I had responded earlier to another query regarding heart disease. Hope that answers your question
4:46 Comment From Santino
My son has asthma. Can this virus put his life in jeopardy?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Hi Santino, In most people who contract this virus, it causes only cold-like symptoms. In some people with underlying respiratory conditions like asthma, it could take a more significant course, including causing an asthma flare-up. There have been no deaths reported with this virus (in contrast to say, influenza, which causes several thousand deaths in the US every year).

4:46 Comment From Guest
hi Dr Krishnan the virus seems to be travelling very rapidly. can you share your thoughts on this? additionally can you give us an idea in terms of prevention where HANDWASHING comes into play?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Good question. Not enough is known about how virus outbreaks happen, how do they travel in waves. Possibly something to do with the "immunogenicity" of the virus - i.e. how the virus overcomes routine host defense.

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Handwashing cannot be over-emphasized. Most respiratory viruses are transmitted by droplets and handwashing is a great way to stay healthy. With specific reference to this virus, hygiene precautions is essential.

4:47 Comment From Maddie
my son is 15 and he suffers from asthma. Do I have to be concerned?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Hi Maddie, Please see comments above regarding asthma and this virus.

5:19 Comment From Guest
I am immuno suppressed and take Enbrel

5:19 Comment From Shannon
Hi Dr. Krishnan. My daughter is a patient of yours, 3.5, 26 week preemie. She is on advair twice daily. If she comes down with any sort of cough, should I immediately start her on albuterol? Even if I think she is breathing okay?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Hi Shannon, If your daughter develops a cold, do what you have always done. If she starts coughing, do give her albuterol and see if there is a response. Often colds will cause her to cough with something as simple as a postnasal drip. If her cough does not improve, call me!
5:19 Comment From Lucy Wright
My son is 5 and has asthma..I am very concerned. How fast will the breathing hardships come and can he die?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Hi Lucy, Most affected just have cold like symptoms. If your son does not have an asthma action plan, be sure to contact his physician. There are no deaths reported with this virus so far.

5:19 Comment From Guest
Would a flu shot deter this virus if even a little bit?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
The flu shot specifically affords protection against specific strains of the influenza virus (that are contained in the vaccine). It will not protect you against any other viruses (including the strains of influenza that may not be contained in that year's vaccine). However, this would be an opportunity to take your flu shot this year.

5:20 Comment From carmen Higgins
My husband has asthma he is 64 , and does get frequent colds normally. Will he acquire this virus easily since he has a condition already? I have told him not to touch his face , but many times he does it so unconsciously. is there any other way to acquire this virus?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
This virus spreads by droplets. Being around sick people, touching infected surfaces will increase chances of getting any respiratory virus including this one. Again, this virus does not target any individuals with specific conditions, but rather it can cause more symptoms in these individuals.

5:20 Comment From Dawn
My 15 yr old son has allergy induced asthma, had what seemed to be a cold into wheezing and his inhaler was not helping the tightness in his chest. I took him to his pediatrician who prescribed Prednisone for 5 days and it worked. No more tightness in chest. He does however wheeze every now and again and has runny nose. Do you think this could have been or is the virus? Is there a specific test one can take to detect if it is this particular strain?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Hi Dawn, You are describing a virus- associated asthma exacerbation in your son. Yes, this virus can also cause a similar exacerbation. On current evidence, this specific strain of the enterovirus does not seem to cause severe illness as compared to other similar respiratory viruses. As for specific tests, some hospitals/offices offer testing for common viruses. However, this specific strain can only be tested at a state lab (with assistance from the CDC). Knowing the strain will not change the treatment of affected individuals.
5:20 Comment From Guest
My child has severe asthma. How quickly do symptoms flare? If he's asleep, will we catch it in time?

5:20 Comment From regina fisher
Can this virus become deadly or is it deadly

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
See previous comments. There are currently no deaths reported due to this strain of enterovirus.

5:20 Comment From Guest
How is the Virus spread?

5:20 Comment From Christine via Facebook
If this is only passed on through direct contact with someone who has it why was this not contained when the first child came down with it? Also what is being done so other states are not affected by it?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Enteroviruses and other respiratory viruses like the common cold, influenza are easily spread by droplets. When there was a spurt of respiratory illness, the CDC was called in to investigate and this strain was identified. By this time, several people had been infected and in today's modern world diseases travel rapidly.

5:20 Comment From colleen
My son has had a horrible cough for three weeks. He has been on two different antibiotics. Album earl and prednisone but it isn't getting better he had a chest xray but not pneumonia. Today the dr said it was viral but not enteroviruses. Is there a specific test for this?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Some labs/hospitals/offices can test for common viruses including enterovirus. But the specific strain can be tested only at a state lab (with assistance from the CDC).

5:20 Comment From Tierra via Facebook
How is it being passed on?

5:21 Comment From Sarah via Facebook
I have read over and over that adults don't need to worry about this because our immune systems are intact. I've even heard "adults don't have to worry at all". I have a weakened immune system from mono years back and a history of asthma. I get sick very very easily. Adults are not immune to this, correct? Especially in a situation like mine? We're careful in my house every cold/flu season (well, daily) but this has me worried. Thanks
Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
In general, this virus causes mild disease in adults who are otherwise healthy. If you have a truly weakened immune system, and if you pick up cold like symptoms, consult (call/see) your doctor. Meanwhile, I see that you are careful in the cold/flu season - washing hands and not being around sick people (including children) will help. If you have symptoms of asthma, make sure you have an active asthma action plan. Get your flu shot, eat healthy.

5:21 Comment From Marisol
What are the symptoms and is there a cure?

Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
In most people, the symptoms are that of the common cold. Those with underlying respiratory disorders or immune defects, it could cause more severe illness. There are no direct "cures" for this virus as with most other viruses. General health measures, good hand hygiene are key

5:21 Comment From Guest
Will all kids who get the virus have trouble breathing?

5:59 Dr. Sankaran Krishnan:
Thank you for your questions.
To summarize, be aware of this virus. Like other respiratory viruses, prevention is the best approach. Good hand hygiene, being away from sick people helps. If you have asthma, make sure you have an updated asthma action plan from your physician. Take your flu shot!
Parents, if your child has a cold, try to keep them home when possible and watch them rather than sending them back to school (I know that this may be difficult for some parents...)

Stay healthy

6:16