
CLEVELAND COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NC DHHS Confirms Enterovirus D68 Has Reached North Carolina

Shelby, NC – The Cleveland County Health Department has received notice from the NC Department of Health and Human Services confirming the presence of enterovirus D68, or EV-D68, in six patients from North Carolina. The specimens that tested positive for EV-D68 were obtained from children ages 10 and under with respiratory illnesses. Testing was conducted at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on specimens submitted from hospitals across the state.

Specific information about the children, including county of residence or hospital location, is not being released in order to protect patient confidentiality.

DHHS' Division of Public Health has been monitoring this situation very closely," said Dr. Zack Moore, a pediatrician and epidemiologist with the Division of Public Health. "The confirmed cases were located in different parts of the state, so it is important for everyone to take necessary actions to protect yourself from EV-D68 and other respiratory viruses. There are no vaccines and no specific treatments for EV-D68, so prevention is the best option."

There are more than 100 types of enteroviruses and 10-15 million infections across the US each year. Enteroviruses are common viruses that can cause a range of symptoms, include runny nose, coughing, mouth sores, fever and body aches. Some patients will also develop wheezing and difficulty breathing.

"EV-D68 is one of many enteroviruses that can cause illness," said Dr. Moore. "Enterovirus infections are not generally life-threatening but can sometimes be severe, especially for children with asthma or other underlying respiratory conditions. If you or your child experience cold-like symptoms and difficulty breathing, contact your health care provider right away."

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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. Health officials are recommending that people take the following actions to protect themselves from infection with EV-D68 and other respiratory illnesses:

1. Wash hands vigorously and often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers.
2. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
3. Avoid kissing, hugging and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are sick.
4. Frequently disinfect touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
5. Stay home when sick.

Since people with asthma are higher risk for respiratory illnesses, health officials are reminding everyone with asthma to take their medications as prescribed and make sure their asthma is under good control. Health officials are also recommending getting a flu vaccine as soon as possible to help prevent another important cause of respiratory illness that could be going around at the same time.

Since mid-August, EV-D68 has been linked to clusters of respiratory illness in 27 other states, including some illnesses that have been severe.

Dorothea Wyant, Health Director for Cleveland County, stated “We are in contact with officials from the Division of Public Health regarding the spread of this virus across the state and will respond as needed to safeguard the residents of Cleveland County.”

For more information, visit the CDC website on Enterovirus D68:
<http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/about/ev-d68.html>.

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