

The Enterovirus D68, which causes respiratory illness in children, especially youngsters with asthma, has spread to New Jersey. There are a total of nine laboratory confirmed cases in New Jersey. Confirmed cases in NJ as of October 3, 2014 include residents from Sussex, Essex, Passaic, Middlesex, Mercer, Morris, Camden and Burlington counties. A preschool student in Mercer County is New Jersey's first confirmed death, on September 25th, linked to Enterovirus D68. Test results confirmed the virus. As of October 20, the Ocean County Health Department stated that there are no confirmed cases in Ocean County.

Because Enterovirus is 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, it is important that the school district provide you with some pertinent information and constructive suggestions.

School and home must work together for the health and safety of all students. Early detection and prevention of respiratory illness, particularly in school settings among students, is an important function of our school staff and nurses. Unfortunately, in the beginning it is difficult to distinguish between a regular cold and Enterovirus. Not all respiratory illnesses occurring now are due to Enterovirus. However, if your child develops a fever, rash, or breathing difficulties, seek medical attention right away. Children with asthma or a history of breathing problems are particularly susceptible for severe symptoms.

Students who present themselves with symptoms will be referred to their parents for medical follow-up, and we insist that students stay home until they are symptom-free and/or are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.

Following sound health habits will go a long way to minimizing the risk to our students. Therefore we ask you to join us in reminding students to wash their hands regularly. We also want you to know that the district will be taking extra precautions, as we do annually during flu season. Our custodial staff will clean and disinfect classrooms and other common areas more frequently, especially surfaces which are touched regularly, including doorknobs, desks and lunch tables.

Typically, Enterovirus causes upper respiratory symptoms such as cough, runny nose, sneezing, body/muscle aches and possibly low-grade fever. Infected individuals generally recover on their own without incident. However, some individuals, especially those with weakened immune systems or underlying medical conditions, such as asthma, may experience complications and require hospitalization with supportive therapy. The preventive steps people can take to avoid becoming ill are similar to those of most illnesses like the flu. Good hand hygiene is your best defense against getting infected with Enterovirus.

To help protect yourself and others from Enterovirus infections:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact (kissing, touching, sharing eating utensils and shaking hands) with
- people who are sick
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as door knobs and toys
- Stay home when sick and call your healthcare provider

Use good respiratory hygiene; coughing and sneezing into a tissue or elbow and properly disposing of tissues

Please refer to the following sites for additional information:

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

NJ Department of Health: http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/faq/ev_faq.pdf