

**COUNTY OF**



**ALLEGHENY**

**RICH FITZGERALD**  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

## **IMPORTANT HEALTH NOTICE FOR SCHOOLS**

### **Information on Enterovirus D68**

As you may be aware from recent media reports, enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) has been detected in specimens from children with severe illness in 18 states as of September 18, including Pennsylvania. In southwestern PA there has been a recent increase in emergency department visits for respiratory illness in children, but test results for EV-D68 are not yet available as of September 18. EV-D68 primarily causes respiratory illness, although the full spectrum of disease remains unclear. As with other non-polio enteroviruses, many infections will be mild and self-limited, requiring only symptomatic care. However, some people with severe respiratory illness may need to be hospitalized and receive intensive supportive therapy. There is no specific treatment or vaccine for EV-D68 infections. The virus likely spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or touches contaminated surfaces.

### **Steps to protect school staff and students from respiratory illnesses**

There are no national or state recommendations for any special precaution to prevent EV-D68 other than the usual measures for preventing respiratory illness (see below). A majority of children with confirmed disease have a history of asthma, so compliance with asthma treatment regimens and heightened watchfulness for wheezing or shortness of breath in this population is advisable.

Below are steps that students and staff can take to prevent transmission of respiratory illness:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching eyes, noses and mouths with unwashed hands
- Avoid kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are ill
- Disinfect frequently commonly touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, with standard bleach solutions, especially when someone is ill
- Ensure children with asthma follow their treatment regimen and contact their healthcare providers if there are any problems.
- Refer students with cold-like symptoms with wheezing or difficulty breathing to parents for medical follow-up. Nurses and administrators should recommend that a child stay home from school if experiencing fever, with exclusion until 24 hours after fever free off fever-reducing medication.
- To protect against influenza, encourage flu vaccination this fall for all staff and students. Vaccination against influenza is recommended yearly for everyone 6 months and older.

**Reference material**

The PA Department of Health has published a document titled “Frequently Asked Questions: Enterovirus D68” which is attached. This may be a suitable document to put on your website if you would like a reference document for parents.

A link to the CDC website may also be helpful:

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

There is also a poster with prevention messages on the CDC website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/about/EV68-infographic.html>

**Need more information?**

To obtain information regarding the number of confirmed cases in Allegheny County, guidance for parental communication, or if you have any other questions, please contact the Allegheny County Health Department at 412-687-2243.