

Human metapneumovirus



WHAT IS IT?

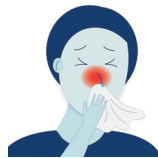
Human metapneumovirus (HMPV) is an RNA virus that commonly causes respiratory symptoms after entering the body through the eyes, nose, or mouth. It is in the same virus family as respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) but can be distinguished by PCR testing, and the overall incidence of HMPV is lower. People ill with HMPV can transmit the virus via coughing, sneezing, or via fomites that can secrete on hands, objects, or surfaces. Touching these surfaces then eyes, nose, or mouth cause infection. Most HMPV illnesses occur in the late winter and spring.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

- In 2023, CDC reported a 36% increase in HPMV cases in the spring, which may be related to lowered immunity after masking and distancing during the pandemic.
- [In 2018](#), HMPV caused 643,000 hospital admissions and 16,100 deaths worldwide among children under 5.
- Infants (<1 year) have disproportionately high risks of severe infection, accounting for more than 50% of HPMV hospitalizations.
- There is no antiviral therapy or vaccine specifically aimed at treating HMPV.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Symptoms that occur within 3-6 days of exposure include runny nose, sneezing, fever, wheezing, decrease in appetite, coughing which can progress to bronchitis or pneumonia.



WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IT?

1. Ill people should isolate from others as much as possible.
2. Provide supportive care for “cold-like symptoms” as directed by medical professionals.
3. Seek medical attention if symptoms do not resolve in a week or two or become more serious.
4. Practice “respiratory hygiene” – covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
5. Wash hands with soap and water; use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap/water not available.
6. Clean and disinfect hard surfaces that may be contaminated with respiratory droplets from an infected person.

Why the increase now?

It's speculated that with relaxation of COVID prevention strategies (e.g., mask wearing and physical distancing), the low levels of HMPV that typically circulate have been able to take off.

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