

Robert P. Astorino
County Executive

Sherlita Amler, M.D.
Commissioner of Health

September 22, 2014

Dear School Health Staff and Administrators:

Please share this with your school physicians.

With cases of enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) likely to affect children in Westchester County, we are writing to provide you with information about the virus and preventive measures that you can take at your school to keep students healthy.

- Enterovirus D68 has been around for many decades and is most likely to cause the symptoms of the common cold.
- There is no practical reason to test most people for this virus since treatment is not impacted by this diagnosis.
- Please notify the Westchester County Department of Health at 914-813-5159, Mon-Fri 8:30-5:00, about any absenteeism or respiratory illness that is unusual for your school(s).
- Having sick individuals stay home from school or work, hand washing with soap and water, properly covering coughs and sneezes, and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces will prevent enterovirus D68 and all other infections from spreading.
- Following your asthma management plan and regimen is one of the most helpful and important things that can be done.
- Get your annual flu shot .

EV-D68 causes a respiratory illness that is currently affecting children in many states, including New York. No cases have been identified to date in Westchester County but this is likely to change, as EV-D68 and enteroviruses are common viruses that have been around for many years and most frequently cause the symptoms of the common cold. An increased number of children in two hospitals in the Midwest tested positive for this virus, most of whom had asthma or other underlying medical problems. No other such clusters have been identified to date; all others testing positive have been isolated cases, the significance of which is not clear.

The majority of the cases being referenced in the media have not tested positive for EV-D68; widely available tests can only test for the enterovirus family of viruses and another related group of viruses, of which there are **hundreds** of types. Testing specifically for EV-D68 at this time is only available from a few public health reference labs and is not routinely recommended since there is no impact on treatment. There is no specific medication and no vaccine for this virus.

Symptoms of EV-D68 include a runny nose, sneezing, coughing and body aches, the symptoms of the common cold or mild viral illness. The virus is spread by being in close contact with someone who is infected or by touching your mouth, eyes or nose after touching a contaminated surface. Having sick individuals stay home from school or work, properly covering coughs and sneezes, and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces will help prevent enterovirus D68, as well as other infections.



Increases in respiratory illness are common with the start of the school year and individual or isolated cases of EV-D68 are not reportable to the health department, but as always, please notify the Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) at the above phone number if you should experience any unusual absenteeism or respiratory illnesses in your school(s). Please also notify the WCDH of any individual for whom you are aware that specific testing for EV-D68 is being done.

Many of the children who have experienced severe illness during this recent outbreak have had a history of asthma or wheezing in the past. One of the more important measures that school staff, parents, and students can take is to ensure the optimal adherence to one's asthma management plan and medication regimen
http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/tools_for_control.htm .

There is a vaccine for the flu, another common viral infection which sickens thousands of children and adults annually and also can result in more severe respiratory illness, especially among those with asthma or other medical conditions. Everyone should get their annual flu shot.

Thorough and effective hand washing is the best way to avoid the spread of respiratory illnesses like EV-D68. Unfortunately, many people - especially children - fail to wash their hands thoroughly. To help students learn the right way to wash, the Westchester County Department of Health wants to provide staff at your school with a free teaching tool and hands-on training that can help correct the hand washing mistakes that spread disease. This demonstration will be brief, can be conducted at a staff meeting and will provide little disruption to your schedule. You can then take this lesson to your classrooms and teach students the proper way to wash hands.

Sign up by clicking on this link <http://bit.ly/J8hre3> and a health department instructor will contact you to set up a day and time for the training. Once you and your staff have tried this tool, with its fake germs that glow white under a black light in the places where people miss when they wash, they are sure to remember how to wash properly. This teaching tool never fails to engage and impress.

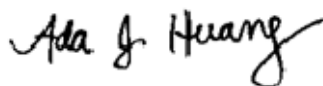
For more information about EV-D68 and to download a flyer detailing how to prevent its spread, visit the health department's website at www.westchestergov.com/health.

Please contact the Westchester County Department of Health for any additional questions or information.

Sincerely,



Sherlita Amler, M.D.
Commissioner of Health



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