

**What are enteroviruses?**

Enteroviruses are the second most common cause of viral infections in people. Enteroviruses are the leading cause of viral infections. There are currently 64 types of enteroviruses, which cause a wide variety of illnesses with fever, including three vaccine preventable enteroviruses that cause polio.

**What are the symptoms of enterovirus illness?**

Most people infected with an enterovirus have no symptoms. Some enteroviruses cause symptoms similar to the cold or flu such as fever, body aches, sore throat and mild to moderate skin rash. Less often these viruses can cause more serious symptoms such as meningitis (swelling of the spinal nerve cords) or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Infants, children and adolescents are more likely to become infected and develop illness from enteroviruses than adults.

**What time of year do enteroviral infection occur?**

These viruses are most common in the summer and fall.

**How soon do symptoms appear?**

If any symptoms appear they normally appear from 2 - 10 days after infection. The usual duration of illness is 3 - 6 days.

**What are the complications of enterovirus infections?**

Severe headache, backache, and abdominal pain may occur. Swelling and ulcers can develop in the throat and mouth. The muscles of the heart can become swollen and, in some unusual cases, "bloodshot" eyes can occur with swelling around the eyes. The most severe cases can develop meningitis, encephalitis, and a polio-like paralysis.

**How does a person become infected with one of these viruses?**

These viruses are spread by direct contact with food, water or surfaces that have been contaminated with stool. Some strains of enteroviruses are occasionally transmitted through the air and can cause a respiratory illness.

**How is the disease diagnosed?**

These diseases are usually mild in nature and diagnosed based on symptoms. Blood tests and specific viral testing are available.

**How are the infection and its complications treated?**

There are no specific drugs to fight these viruses, but some medications can be used to make the person feel better. Although you can develop immunity to one virus, you can still get sick with any of the other enteroviruses.

**How can enterovirus infection be prevented?**

Unfortunately, there are no vaccines for these viruses. Good personal hygiene, especially handwashing before handling food and after using the bathroom and/or changing diapers, can reduce the spread of these viruses.