

**What is parainfluenza?**

It is a group of viruses that usually cause severe cold-like symptoms, including fever and chills and less commonly, pneumonias.

**Who is at risk?**

Anyone; however, illness is more common and severe in infants, children and the elderly.

**How do you get parainfluenza?**

It is spread directly by contact with saliva and indirectly by contact with droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. It is also spread indirectly by hands, tissues, eating utensils and other articles freshly contaminated with respiratory secretions of an infected person.

**What are the symptoms?** The symptoms may include fever, chills, headache, general muscle aches, tiredness, lack of appetite, runny nose, sore throat, as well as lung infections, such as bronchitis or pneumonia. In infants, vomiting or diarrhea may also occur.

**How soon after infection do symptoms appear?**

They symptoms usually start 1 to 10 days after infection.

**Where is parainfluenza found?**

The viruses are only found in humans. Infections occur most commonly during fall, winter and occasionally spring.

**How long can a person spread parainfluenza?**

A person can spread the virus to others shortly before illness and during their illness.

**How is parainfluenza treated?**

There is no specific treatment. Most people get well on their own in 2-5 days. The use of antibiotics is not appropriate in most cases because antibiotics are not effective against viruses.

**How can the spread of parainfluenza be prevented?**

Contact isolation should be used if children are hospitalized. Other ill persons should avoid contact with young children, the debilitated or chronically ill, the elderly, and persons with other illnesses. Frequent handwashing, covering the mouth when coughing and sneezing, proper disposal of tissues, and cleaning of dishes and drinking utensils will also decrease the spread of this and other viruses.