

Human Metapneumovirus Fact Sheet

What is it?

Human metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a newly identified virus that causes a spectrum of respiratory illness from mild upper respiratory tract infections to severe bronchiolitis and pneumonia. It was first identified by researchers in the Netherlands in 2001 but is thought to have been infecting humans for at least 50 years.

What are the symptoms?

Clinical symptoms of HMPV seem indistinguishable from Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) infections. Symptoms include high fever, severe cough, difficulty breathing, abnormally rapid breathing, wheezing, vomiting and diarrhea.

HMPV also causes RSV-like disease in elderly adults. The at-risk population is elderly people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

How is it spread?

Spread of the virus is most likely to occur by direct or close contact with the respiratory secretions of infected persons, or by contact with objects and surfaces contaminated by their secretions.

How can it be prevented?

Control measures used for other respiratory illnesses should be emphasized: covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or coughing or sneezing into upper sleeve rather than hands; prompt disposal of used tissues; proper hand washing.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

References

- American Lung Association, Human Metapneumovirus, 2010.
- Illinois Department of Public Health, HMPV health fact sheet, April 2009.

CD-203

2011/09/06

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