
Parechovirus

Summary

- Good hygiene is essential to help prevent parechovirus infection.
 - Parechovirus is spread from person to person by direct contact with nose and throat discharges (including saliva, sputum or nasal mucus), droplets (sneezing, coughing) or faeces (stools) of infected people.
 - There is no specific treatment and no vaccine available against parechovirus.
 - People who are unwell with colds, flu-like illness or gastro illness should stay away from small babies.
-

Parechovirus is a virus closely related to enteroviruses. Enteroviruses cause illnesses such as diarrhoea, common colds, and hand, foot and mouth disease (not as common). Good hygiene is essential to help prevent spread of the infection.

While anyone can be infected with parechovirus, children, especially very young children are particularly at risk if they have contact with other children who are unwell with parechovirus.

Illness with parechovirus ranges from mild disease with diarrhoea or respiratory infection to potentially severe illness with fever, which may require treatment in hospital. Most children – even those hospitalised - recover after a few days with supportive treatment.

Spread of parechovirus

Parechovirus is spread from person to person by direct contact with nose and throat discharges (including saliva, sputum or nasal mucus), droplets (sneezing, coughing) or faeces (poo) of infected people.

Symptoms of parechovirus

Parechovirus can cause no symptoms at all, but newborn children or young infants with parechovirus may develop:

- a high temperature (fever)
- irritability, lethargy or off food
- a rash
- fast breathing
- diarrhoea or loose stools.

Occasionally, babies can become unwell very quickly. This may require management in hospital to monitor your child closely. Rarely, the virus can affect the lining of the brain, leading to more severe symptoms such as seizures or muscle jerks.

Diagnosis of parechovirus

Diagnosis may be made by your doctor based on symptoms. Tests are usually not required for mild illness, but your doctor or a hospital specialist may request specific tests for parechovirus for more severe disease.

Treatment for parechovirus

There is no specific treatment for parechovirus. Fever in children under six months of age needs review by a doctor. If diarrhoea is present, offer the child plenty of fluids.

If there are any worrying symptoms or you remain concerned about anything, consult your doctor immediately.

Prevention of parechovirus

There is no vaccine available against parechovirus.

Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of parechovirus to others, both for those infected and their carers. This includes:

- washing hands with soap and water after going to the toilet, before eating, after wiping noses, and after changing nappies or soiled clothing
- thoroughly washing and cleaning any soiled clothing and surfaces or toys that may have been contaminated
- using separate eating and drinking utensils.

People who are unwell with colds, flu-like illness or gastro illness should stay away from small babies. If you must care for a small baby and are unwell, wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub before touching or feeding the baby.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Local council health department
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Department of Health Victoria, Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Section Tel. 1300 65 11 60

Things to remember

- Good hygiene is essential to help prevent parechovirus infection.
- Parechovirus is spread from person to person by direct contact with nose and throat discharges (including saliva, sputum or nasal mucus), droplets (sneezing, coughing) or faeces (stools) of infected people.
- There is no specific treatment and no vaccine available against parechovirus.
- People who are unwell with colds, flu-like illness or gastro illness should stay away from small babies.

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Department of Health and Human Services - RHP&R - Health Protection - Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2021 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.