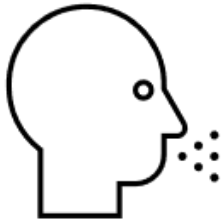
Respiratory Viruses

Respiratory viruses can cause the common cold and influenza-like illness. While you may be familiar with these illnesses — and have likely had them before —you may not be as familiar with all the different viruses that cause them. Some of the common respiratory viruses that make people sick include:

- Influenza
- Parainfluenza
- Adenovirus
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)
- Rhinovirus
- Enterovirus
- Coronavirus
- Human Metapneumovirus

How do they spread?

Respiratory viruses primarily spread to others by respiratory droplets and aerosols that travel through the air when someone who is sick breathes, speaks, sings, coughs, or sneezes. They can also spread by having contact (like kissing or shaking hands) with an infected person, or by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. These viruses can live on surfaces for many hours.

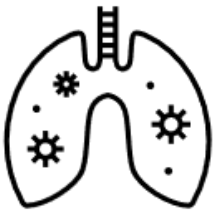


How can you prevent yourself from getting sick?

- ✓ Avoid close contact with sick people.
- ✓ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- ✓ Avoid touching your face (especially mouth, nose, and eyes).
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- ✓ Disinfect objects and surfaces regularly (like door knobs, countertops, and light switches).

Who is at higher risk for severe illness?

While most people will only experience mild to moderate symptoms from a respiratory virus, some people may get seriously ill or even die. Those with weakened immune systems, infants, older adults, and those with existing lung or heart conditions are at a higher risk of developing severe illness from respiratory viruses.



Common Symptoms of Respiratory Viruses:

- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Cough
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Body aches

Respiratory Viruses

Know the different types of respiratory viruses.

Adenoviruses

There are more than 50 types of adenoviruses that can infect people.

Symptoms: Aside from the common respiratory symptoms, adenoviruses can also cause diarrhea, pink eye, swelling of the bladder, and stomach/intestinal distress.

Diagnosis: Adenoviruses can be diagnosed by a health care provider using laboratory testing.

Seasonality: Winter and early spring

Prevention: Avoid close contact with sick people, wash your hands, and disinfect surfaces frequently.

Coronaviruses, Rhinoviruses & Enteroviruses

- There are seven coronaviruses that can infect people. Sometimes coronaviruses that infect animals can change and make people sick, becoming a new human coronavirus. There are four seasonal coronaviruses, named HKU1, NL63, 229E, and OC43. **COVID-19 is a specific strain of coronavirus (*also known as the novel coronavirus) that is more serious than seasonal coronaviruses.***
- There are more than 100 rhinoviruses that can infect people. About 50% of common colds are caused by some kind of rhinovirus.
- There are more than 100 enteroviruses that can infect people. Two particularly serious types of enteroviruses are called EV-D68 and EV-A71.

Symptoms: These viruses often cause what we think of as the common cold. Symptoms can include all of the common symptoms listed on Page 1.

Diagnosis: Clinical diagnosis is based on symptoms. Laboratory tests are not routinely performed because a result would not affect treatment options.

Seasonality:

- **Coronaviruses:** Winter
- **Rhinovirus/Enterovirus:** Spring and summer

Prevention: The most effective way to prevent getting sick with COVID-19 is to get vaccinated with the updated COVID-19 vaccine every year. Avoid close contact with sick people, wash your hands, and disinfect surfaces frequently.

Respiratory Viruses

Know the different types of respiratory viruses.

Influenza (flu) Viruses

There are many different strains of influenza viruses that change over time, which is why you should get the flu vaccine every year. There are two main types of influenza viruses that cause disease during the winter months—type A and B.

Symptoms: Symptoms can include all of the common symptoms listed on Page 1.

Diagnosis: Laboratory testing can tell you if you have the flu. Though rapid diagnostic tests are less reliable than PCR test options, they can give you results in 30 minutes or less.

Treatment: Antiviral drugs (such as Tamiflu) are available and can help lessen symptoms, shorten the time you are sick, prevent serious complications, and stop the spread of flu. They work best when started within 48 hours of symptoms beginning.

Seasonality: Fall and winter

Prevention: The most effective way to prevent getting sick with the flu is to get vaccinated with the flu vaccine every year. Additionally, avoid close contact with sick people, wash your hands, and disinfect surfaces frequently.

Human Metapneumoviruses

There are four types of human metapneumoviruses that cause respiratory illnesses. They are most commonly diagnosed in young children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.

Symptoms: Symptoms can include all of the common symptoms listed on Page 1.

Diagnosis: Human metapneumovirus can be diagnosed by a health care provider using laboratory testing.

Seasonality: Late winter and spring

Prevention: Avoid close contact with sick people, wash your hands, and disinfect surfaces frequently.

Parainfluenza Viruses

There are four types of parainfluenza viruses that cause respiratory illnesses. They are most common in infants and young children, though anyone can be infected.

Symptoms: Symptoms can include all of the common symptoms listed on Page 1.

Diagnosis: Parainfluenza can be diagnosed by a health care provider using laboratory testing.

Seasonality: Depending on the type, fall or spring and early summer.

Prevention: Avoid close contact with sick people, wash your hands, and disinfect surfaces frequently.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Symptoms: While most people with an RSV infection have mild illness, in some severe cases, breathing difficulties may develop that require hospitalization, particularly in infants and older adults.

Diagnosis: Laboratory diagnosis is usually **not** performed, although there are tests available through some Wisconsin laboratories.

Seasonality: Fall and winter

Prevention: Palivizumab, a medication, can help prevent severe illness in those who are at high risk. Vaccines are available to protect older adults from severe RSV. Vaccines for pregnant people or monoclonal antibody products are available to protect infants and young children from severe RSV. Additionally, avoid close contact with sick people, wash your hands, and disinfect surfaces frequently.