

## News Release

October 2, 2014

### **Hamilton patients being tested for neurological symptoms – possible connection to EV-D68 being investigated**

(Hamilton, ON) – Four Hamilton area patients, including one who tested positive for enterovirus D68 (EV-D68), are now being assessed for neurological symptoms that include muscle weakness. These symptoms are similar to clusters that are being reported in other centres in Canada and the U.S.

“At this point, we don’t know the cause of the muscle weakness,” says Dr. Lennox Huang, chief of pediatrics at McMaster Children’s Hospital (MCH). “And it’s not clear that it is EV-D68 related. However, along with our partners at the Hamilton Regional Laboratory Medicine Program, we are pursuing the possibility of a connection and, in the interim, we want to keep parents informed.”

“Sudden onset of muscle weakness or partial paralysis is very rare in children and, whenever those symptoms appear, it’s important to seek immediate medical care,” says Dr. Brandon Meaney, division head, pediatric neurology. “This is not common fatigue or body ache that we’re referring to. It’s much more serious than that. If your child is not able to walk, has trouble moving his or her limbs, or has problems breathing, take them to a doctor right away.”

Sophisticated laboratory testing conducted by the Hamilton Regional Laboratory Medicine Program (HRLMP) has identified 139 cases of EV-D68 in the Hamilton region over the past five weeks (since August 28.)

“We continue to test samples as they come in, and this information is helping us monitor the prevalence of EV-D68 across Hamilton,” says Dr. Marek Smieja, head of virology, HRLMP. “What’s encouraging is that we continue to see a decrease. That shows that EV-D68 is now past its peak and on the decline.”

### Important Facts about EV-D68:

- EV-D68 is a common infection this year and in the vast majority of cases, it causes only mild cold symptoms and patients recover well.
- Because EV-D68 is so common this year, some people with other health problems will also happen to have EV-D68. This does not mean EV-D68 caused their health problems.
- There have been no deaths from EV-D68 in the Hamilton region. A very small number of children in North America who have tested positive for D68 have died from other illnesses.

McMaster Children's Hospital is maintaining its usual high standard of infection control to prevent the spread of infection among inpatients and there has been no transmission of EV-D68 within the hospital.

The medical team of pediatricians and infectious disease experts at McMaster Children's Hospital offer the following advice to parents:

- Mild symptoms of EV-D68 may include fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough, and body and muscle aches. If your child has these symptoms, but is breathing relatively comfortably, care for them just as you would for any cold or flu. Testing for enterovirus is **not needed** in these cases.
- EV-D68, just like more common types of respiratory viruses, can cause difficulty breathing. If your child **is having trouble breathing**, bring him or her to the Emergency Department immediately. Children who have asthma are particularly vulnerable and should be monitored closely.
- All children should get flu shots, especially if they have asthma or other chronic conditions. These immunizations do not protect against EV-D68 but are important to minimize the chance of acquiring influenza, which is just as big a concern. This year's vaccine will be ready by mid-October.
- As a family, learn and use infection control practices: wash your hands frequently, cough into your sleeve or into a tissue that is disposed of immediately, and stay home from school or work if you have a cold or the flu.

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