

First US child dies from enterovirus D68

October 1 2014, by Kerry Sheridan

A child in the northeastern US state of Rhode Island has become the first to die from an ongoing outbreak of a respiratory virus, enterovirus D68, health officials said Wednesday.

The child died from an unusual combination of enterovirus D68—which has infected more than 470 kids across the United States since August—and a staph infection.

"Infection by both *Staphylococcus aureus* sepsis and EV-D68 is a very rare combination that can cause very severe illness in children and adults," the Rhode Island Department of Health said in a statement.

Enterovirus D68 typically causes flu-like symptoms, but in some cases it can cause wheezing and breathing problems that may require hospitalization.

A spike in cases among patients nationwide has reached 472 people, most of them children, in 41 states, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Concerns have also mounted over the emergence of nine cases in Colorado where children had respiratory infections that were followed by acute neurologic illness, including sudden limb weakness.

Experts are investigating whether there may be a link between the enterovirus outbreak and the paralysis cases.

Four cases of children who had recent respiratory infections, followed by neurologic illness with limb weakness are also being tracked in Boston, Massachusetts.

"At this time, a connection between EV-D68 and the neurologic illness with [limb weakness](#) has not been definitively proven," Boston Children's Hospital said in a statement.

The children range in age from four to 15 years old. One is in intensive care, two are hospitalized and one has been discharged, the hospital added.

Some enteroviruses, including D68, have been shown in rare cases in the past to be capable of causing [neurologic symptoms](#) and sudden muscle weakness.

Viruses in this family typically circulate in the late summer to early fall, before flu season begins in earnest.

If the seasons start to overlap, experts say the potential for dual infections could be particularly dangerous for children with asthma.

There is no vaccine to prevent EV-D68, and frequent hand-washing is the best way to prevent it, experts say.

"We are all heartbroken to hear about the death of one of Rhode Island's children," said Michael Fine, director of the Rhode Island Department of Health.

"Many of us will have EV-D68. Most of us will have very mild symptoms and all but very few will recover quickly and completely. The vast majority of [children](#) exposed to EV-D68 recover completely."

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