

What you should know about enteroviruses and babies

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Enteroviruses are a group of viruses that commonly circulate during summer and fall.

These viruses primarily affect [young children](#), who are more susceptible to complications due to their undeveloped immune systems. Many adults

have some immunity from previous exposure.

Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse, a pediatric infectious diseases physician with the Mayo Clinic Children's Center, says there is concern with newborns when it comes to enteroviruses.

"Enteroviruses are spread through [respiratory droplets](#); they can also be spread by something called the fecal-oral route so through stool or feces," says Dr. Rajapakse.

Most adults and [older children](#) may have [mild symptoms](#), if any.

Dr. Rajapakse's concern regarding enteroviruses lies primarily with newborns, especially if the mother is infected around the time of birth.

"Sometimes we see newborns developing very severe viral sepsis, where the virus can impact multiple parts of the baby's body, including the heart and liver," she says.

And that can be a life-threatening infection. With no vaccine or antiviral medications available, prevention is key.

"We really encourage [pregnant women](#) to be careful about exposure to infections during pregnancy and for enteroviruses, especially toward the end of pregnancy or around the time of delivery," says Dr. Rajapakse.

Good hand hygiene and avoiding people who are ill are good ways to prevent transmission and illness.

Symptoms and types of enteroviruses

Enteroviruses are widespread and comprise more than 100 variants or types, including the one responsible for polio. However, the symptoms

are mild or nonexistent for most people infected with non-polio enteroviruses.

Symptoms of a mild non-polio enterovirus infection:

- Fever
- Runny nose, sneezing, cough
- Skin rash
- Mouth blisters
- Body and muscle aches

Diseases caused by non-polio enteroviruses include:

- Acute flaccid myelitis (AFM)
- Encephalitis
- Myocarditis
- Hand, foot, and mouth disease
- Pericarditis

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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