

Parechovirus in the U.S.

From constantly evolving COVID-19 variants to acute hepatitis and [monkeypox](#), there have been multiple public health emergencies causing concern within the past year. The most recent illness on the radar of health experts is parechovirus (PeV), which has spread in the United States prominently enough to prompt the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to issue a [health alert](#).

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), parechoviruses are classified under the umbrella of [enteroviruses](#). While parechoviruses are not new, health experts are advising the public to remain cautious. The big question many have right now is, who is at risk?

“Anyone is at risk of getting parechovirus. However, young babies and newborns are more at risk of having severe infections,” says Dr. Safiat Amuwo, an OSF HealthCare pediatrician and internal medicine physician.

Since May, the CDC has received reports from healthcare providers in multiple states of parechovirus infections in young infants. According to a recent CDC report, nearly two dozen infants were admitted to a Tennessee hospital with the virus this spring.

The CDC’s recent health alert memo adds that, so far, all PeV-positive specimens that have been tested and typed have been PeV-A3 – which is the type most often associated with severe disease.

Dr. Amuwo says the symptoms someone with this strain of parechovirus experiences may vary.

“A lot of times, children and adults don’t have any symptoms. Most people who do have symptoms just have mild symptoms such as diarrhea or respiratory symptoms such as cough, runny nose, and congestion,” Dr. Amuwo explains.

She continues: “In some rare instances, young children and newborns can have severe infections. They can have sepsis, which is an infection of the blood, or they can have neurological complications such as [meningitis](#) or [encephalitis](#).”

Unfortunately, antibiotics are not effective in fighting viral infections – and there is not currently a vaccine for parechovirus.

To protect yourself and your little ones from the virus, follow proper safety measures, such as those put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Amuwo says good hygiene is key.

“For viral infections, you want to practice good hygiene. Make sure you wash your hands after using the bathroom. Wash your hands before eating. Wash your hands after changing soiled diapers or clothing. Make sure that you aren’t sharing food utensils or toothbrushes,” advises Dr. Amuwo

Because the symptoms of parechovirus are not unique to this specific illness, Dr. Amuwo advises parents to pay attention to any symptoms their child may be experiencing.

“Since there are so many viral infections, we can most definitely mistake parechovirus for the flu or some type of common cold such as rhinovirus. However, if your child is severely ill, has trouble breathing, or has some type of change in their behavior, they most definitely should get evaluated,” Dr. Amuwo says.

If your child is experiencing symptoms that may indicate parechovirus, make an appointment with their pediatrician as soon as possible.

If they are experiencing severe symptoms such as high fever or difficulty breathing, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.