

## Human Parainfluenza Viruses

### *Illnesses requiring droplet and contact precautions*

*This handout describes human parainfluenza viruses (common cold and croup) and their symptoms. It also explains how these diseases can be spread and offers steps to prevent others from getting them.*

### **What are human parainfluenza viruses?**

*Human parainfluenza viruses (HPIVs) cause illnesses that affect the respiratory (breathing) system. These illnesses are commonly known as a cold and the croup. They occur most often in young children.*

The viruses can cause infections to return at any time of life. There is no vaccine to protect you from HPIVs.

### **What are the symptoms of HPIVs?**

Symptoms of a cold include a runny nose, cough, sneezing, and a sore throat. But HPIVs can also cause serious diseases such as *pneumonia*, *bronchitis*, and *bronchiolitis*. These diseases occur most often in elderly people and in patients who have problems with their immune systems.

There are 4 types of this virus:

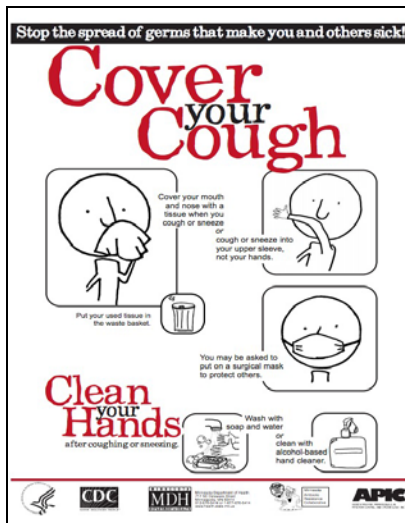
- HPIV-1 and HPIV-2 are linked to croup. HPIV-1 is the leading cause of croup, whereas HPIV-2 is not seen as often. Both types can cause other illnesses in the respiratory tract.
- HPIV-3 is more often linked with bronchiolitis and pneumonia.
- HPIV-4 is not found very often, possibly because it is less likely to cause severe disease.



*Human parainfluenza viruses can cause the common cold.*

### **How are HPIVs spread?**

If you have HPIV symptoms, please practice “respiratory hygiene.” Wear a mask, wash your hands often, and dispose of tissues in wastebaskets when coming into a healthcare facility.



### To Learn More

To learn more about human parainfluenza viruses, visit [www.cdc.gov/parainfluenza/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parainfluenza/index.html).

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Infection Prevention:  
206.598.6122

Pick up a free “Cover Your Cough Kit” at the Information Desk in the main lobby of the hospital, or at your clinic.

### How are parainfluenza viruses spread?

Parainfluenza viruses spread in droplets when someone coughs or sneezes. These droplets may be infectious for up to 1 hour. The viruses may also spread when a person touches something with virus on it and then touches their mouth, eyes, or nose. HPIVs have an *incubation period* of 1 to 7 days. This means it can take up to 1 week from the time you are exposed to the virus until you have symptoms.

Please tell your healthcare provider if you think you have been exposed to a parainfluenza virus.

### How is it diagnosed?

To diagnose an HPIV infection, your doctor may:

- Take a swab of your nose or throat and send it to the lab
- Do an IgM (*immunoglobulin*) blood test to measure the level of certain antibodies in your blood
- Do 2 blood tests to see if there is an increase in IgG (*immunoglobulin G*) antibodies in your blood
- Do an X-ray or computed tomography (CT) scan of your chest

### How are others protected from parainfluenza?

At UW Medical Center, we place a “Droplet Precautions” sign near the door of your room. This tells healthcare workers and your visitors to follow certain precautions when caring for you.

If you are in droplet precautions:

- Hospital staff will wear masks, gowns, and gloves when providing care.
- Visitors who have not been vaccinated should not visit you.
- **We advise hand washing for 15 seconds, using alcohol hand gels, and environmental cleanliness.**
- We will ask you to stay in your room unless you need to go to other areas of the hospital for treatment. If you leave your room, we will ask you to wash your hands and wear a yellow gown, gloves, and a mask.
- Please do **not** use the nutrition rooms. When you want a snack or ice water, ask a member of your care team to bring it to you.

### When can droplet precautions be stopped?

Your doctor will take you off precautions when your symptoms go away and follow-up lab tests show that you no longer have the virus.