

HMPV: Exposure Risks and Prevention Measures

This WorkCare Fact Sheet discusses human metapneumovirus (hMPV) exposure risks, symptoms, and prevention.

WHAT IS HMPV?

Human metapneumovirus (hMPV) is a common respiratory virus in the Paramyxoviridae family. It was first identified by Dutch scientists in 2001, but there is evidence that it has been in circulation for at least 60 years.

EXPOSURE RISK

Global awareness of hMPV exposure risk increased in December 2024 and extended into January 2025 in response to reports of case outbreaks in parts of China. On Jan. 7, 2025, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) stated](#) that an “observed increase in respiratory pathogen detections” in China is within the range expected for this time of year during the northern hemisphere winter for respiratory illnesses, including hMPV, influenza (flu), rhinovirus, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

In the U.S., hMPV primarily circulates in late winter and early spring months. Anyone can get hMPV, but it is most likely to infect young children who lack immunity. Those with the most serious risk for serious illness include infants and young children, older adults, and people with chronic respiratory conditions or immune system disorders.

In general, public health authorities do not consider hMPV to be a serious population health threat that

could lead to a pandemic. However, contagious disease experts constantly monitor levels of exposure risk worldwide because viruses can develop new strains that may increase symptom severity.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms are likely to be mild in healthy adults. This is especially true for those who had it before and developed some immunity to the virus. Symptoms of hMPV are similar to other viral illnesses. They may include cough, fever, runny nose, nasal congestion, and shortness of breath. More severe cases may lead to bronchitis or pneumonia.

DIAGNOSIS + TREATMENT

A provider may diagnose hMPV based on symptoms or use a soft-tipped swab to collect nasal or throat secretions for confirmatory lab testing to help rule out other illnesses (such as COVID-19 or the flu), and to determine the best treatment options. The estimated incubation period after exposure is three to six days.



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Most cases resolve within a week to 10 days. Longer recovery times vary depending on illness severity.

Mild-to-moderate symptoms are treated with supportive care, including rest, sufficient hydration, and over-the-counter remedies. In some cases, use of an inhaler to relieve wheezing may be recommended. There are no antiviral medications for the treatment of hMPV. Because it is a viral – not a bacterial – infection, antibiotics are not effective. Serious illness may require emergency care and hospitalization.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the virus spreads through:

- Inhaling aerosolized droplets or secretions
- Close contact with an infected person
- Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the face, nose, or mouth

PREVENTION

There is no vaccine to prevent hMPV infection. Familiar, recommended preventive measures in workplaces, at home, and in public places include:

- Frequently washing hands with warm water and soap or using hand sanitizer
- Disinfecting countertops, door handles, and items such as equipment or toys
- Not sharing food, eating utensils, or personal-use products with others
- Covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and throwing away tissues
- Wearing a mask after an exposure and when symptoms are present
- Staying home from work when ill and returning after fever resolves

- Avoiding close contact with sick people, as feasible
- Eating a healthy diet, getting daily exercise, and spending time outdoors
- Practicing good sleep hygiene to get plenty of rest
- Avoiding unnecessary travel to regions with contagious disease outbreaks

Healthcare providers are advised to wear personal protective equipment and ensure that respiratory droplet precautions are in place to help reduce exposure risk. Hospital visitors should wear a mask and wash their hands before and after visiting a patient.

WorkCare occupational health professionals are available 24/7 to advise employers and employees on ways to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses and provide care guidance for symptoms. Visit www.workcare.com to learn more.

RELATED RESOURCES

- [National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System interactive dashboard](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Human Metapneumovirus](#), National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information
- [Human Metapneumovirus \(hMPV\)](#), American Lung Association
- [Human Metapneumovirus \(hMPV\) Infection](#), World Health Organization