
Parainfluenza

What is it?

There is more than one type of Parainfluenza virus, all of which can cause upper or lower respiratory infections (pneumonia) in adults and children.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms vary depending on the type of infection. Cold-like symptoms consisting of a runny nose and mild cough are common. Life-threatening respiratory symptoms can be seen in young infants with bronchiolitis. Other symptoms are: fever, congestion, sore throat, croup, wheezing, bronchitis, shortness of breath, and chest pain.

Who is at risk?

Risk factors for Parainfluenza include the young and very old, and people with weakened immune systems. By school age, most children have been exposed to parainfluenza virus. Most adults have antibodies against parainfluenza although they can get repeat infections.

When do symptoms start?

It takes two to six days after coming in contact with the infection.

When is it contagious?

This varies depending of the type. Likely 24 hours before symptoms and while symptoms are present.

How does it spread?

Parainfluenza is spread through contact with droplets from the nose and throat of infected people when they cough or sneeze. It can also be spread by contact with soiled surfaces or objects. These viruses can float in the air for more than an hour.

How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for the viral infection. Your doctor may suggest treating the symptoms with over-the-counter medications.

How can the spread of Parainfluenza be reduced?

- Good hand washing is very important.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Put soiled tissues in the garbage right away.

What should I do if I get sick with Parainfluenza?

- Stay home and away from others until symptoms have gone.
- Get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids.
- See your doctor if your symptoms are severe.

