

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
COUNTY OF SUFFOLK

WILLIAM R. SPENCER, M.D.
LEGISLATOR 18TH DISTRICT

15 PARK CIRCLE – SUITE 209
CENTERPORT, N.Y.
11721

CHAIR
HEALTH COMMITTEE

VICE-CHAIR
WAYS AND MEANS

MEMBER
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE



PHONE: (631) 854-4500
FAX: (631) 854-4503

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Dear Editor,

With the recent upsurge in reports of the respiratory virus, Enterovirus D68 or EV-D68, there has been a significant amount of questions and concerns, particularly about how to keep ourselves and families protected. The relatively unknown virus has progressed through 22 states, including 12 confirmed in New York, and, at the time of writing this letter, there have been a total of 160 confirmed cases. Arming ourselves with the information needed to identify and prevent EV-D68 from spreading is the best way to protect those who are most vulnerable.

We are currently in the middle of EV-D68 season; people are most likely to become infected in the late summer and fall. EV-D68 can cause mild to severe respiratory illness and may include symptoms such as a fever, runny nose, sneezing, coughing, and muscle aches. There is no specific treatment or drug that can cure EV-D68; the virus must run its course. However it is important to seek medical attention immediately in order to treat the symptoms, particularly symptoms related to respiratory ailments. Knowing this, it is critical that close attention is paid to those infected.

While EV-D68 can infect anyone, the virus is generally seen in infants, young children and teenagers as they lack the proper antibodies to defend against infection. Children with asthma are especially susceptible to EV-D68 and in some cases have developed more severe symptoms.

As there is currently no vaccine that can protect against EV-D68, prevention must start with you. Despite its infectiousness, the virus is not fatal and transmission can be easily prevented. The easiest method to prevent infection is to wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers. It is also important to avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Alcohol based sanitizers are effective in guarding against EV-D68, but any gross soiling of the hands should be removed with soap and water. Another way to prevent the spread of the virus is to disinfect frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs, toys and cellphones. Prevention also includes avoiding kissing, hugging and sharing cups or utensils with those who are sick. Practicing good respiratory etiquette by covering your coughs and sneezes and staying home when sick will also go a long way in keeping us all healthy.

I encourage you to not panic, stay informed about all matters related to your health and to take a moment today to share this vital information with your family and friends.

Sincerely,

William R. Spencer, M.D.
Suffolk County Legislator
18th Legislative District