

HUMAN PARECHOVIRUS:

H15/115724

Information for NSW EDs & Paediatricians

Please distribute this information to all staff

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Human parechovirus (HPeV) (closely related to enteroviruses) has been detected in a number of neonates and young infants admitted to NSW hospitals during October and November 2015. Infants present very unwell with a rapid onset of acute sepsis-like symptoms. This is often followed by an erythematous, often confluent rash. There have also been a number of cases involving abdominal complications such as volvulus, intussusception and bowel ischaemia. The recent cases have occurred in infants from many different parts of the state.

Children under 3 months of age are most likely to develop severe disease, but older infants may also be at risk. Most recover with supportive treatment.

Suspect HPeV infections in neonates or young infants with sepsis-like illness and fever >38.0° AND other presentations such as:

- Irritability and appearing to be in pain
- Maculopapular or erythematous rash
- Distended abdomen, diarrhoea
- Tachycardia
- Tachypnoea
- Encephalitis
- Myoclonic jerks
- Hepatitis

Initial Management

- Infants presenting with a fever, sepsis-like signs and/or neurological signs, including irritability, should be assessed and treated for suspected sepsis using local protocols and discussed with an Emergency Consultant or Paediatrician.

Laboratory investigations

- Human parechoviruses are not detected by standard nucleic acid tests (PCR) for enterovirus. HPeV PCR is available at the South Eastern Area Laboratory Services (SEALS), the Children's Hospital Westmead (CHW) and the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL) in Melbourne.
- **Update – HPeV is now also available at the ICPMR laboratory (Pathology West).**
- Collect a stool specimen, nasopharyngeal aspirate or throat swab, and CSF if clinically indicated. A stool specimen and CSF are the preferred samples for HPeV PCR testing.
- Ask your laboratory to send specimens for parechovirus PCR urgently.
- If CSF is collected it should also be sent for routine bacterial and viral testing and blood and urine cultures collected to detect bacterial sepsis.

Infection prevention and control

- Parechovirus is spread from person to person by contact with respiratory secretions or faeces of infected people. Implement contact precautions (which may include gloves, gowns, plastic aprons, masks/face-shields and eye protection) and hand hygiene.

Further Advice on Clinical Management

Can be sought from infectious disease clinicians at Children's Hospital Westmead (02 9845 0000 pager 6675) or Sydney Children's Hospital (02 9382 2222 pager 44893 or via the switchboard).

