

When we think of viral illnesses, the first ones that come to mind are usually winter colds and flu. But unfortunately, viruses don't take a summer break. Be on the alert for these two summertime troublemakers.

- Enteroviruses - The leading cause of summer colds, which sometimes cause nastier symptoms than the winter variety
- Parainfluenza - A respiratory bug that is especially hard on very young children, and leads to more than 250,000 U.S. emergency room visits per year

Summer Colds

Summer colds are more frequent than you might think, and it's not just allergy symptoms. Enteroviruses cause 10 million to 15 million infections in the United States each year, according to the CDC. This large group of viruses can infect tissues in your nose, throat, eyes, digestive tract or other parts of your body. Many people who are infected have no symptoms at all. Others have only a mild, cold-like illness. Some summer colds can take up to 10 days to fully exit the body.

Symptoms may include:

- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Fever
- Body and muscle aches

Enteroviruses can also cause pink eye or hand, foot and mouth disease (a common illness in babies and children that leads to fever, mouth blisters and skin rash). One particular virus strain, enterovirus D68, is known for causing more severe respiratory symptoms, such as wheezing and trouble breathing. Children with asthma have an increased risk of developing such symptoms.

Nothing to Sneeze at

Parainfluenza is another viral infection to watch out for. Although anyone can catch parainfluenza, it occurs most often in babies and young children. Symptoms may include fever, runny nose and coughing. In some cases, parainfluenza leads to more severe respiratory problems, such as croup, bronchitis or pneumonia. It's the second-leading cause of hospitalization for a respiratory illness in the very young.

Summer is the season for fun in the sun, so getting sick now seems particularly unfair. To reduce your risk of catching or spreading a summer bug, wash your hands, often and well, with soap and water. Be extra careful to wash up every time you use the toilet or change a diaper. Regularly wipe down objects you touch a lot, such as doorknobs and keyboards. Try to keep your fingers away from your mouth, nose and eyes.

To protect others if you get sick, minimize close contact, such as shaking hands and hugging goodbye. Don't forget to cover your coughs and sneezes.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor if:

- You or your child's symptoms are more than mild sniffles
- You have symptoms of an infection and are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Your baby is younger than three months old and has a fever

Sources: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/)