



Dr Wolfgang Muller (Consultant Paediatrician)

Parent Information Guide:

Human Metapneumovirus (hMPV) Infection

What is Human Metapneumovirus (hMPV)?

Human Metapneumovirus (hMPV) is a common respiratory virus that can cause coughs, colds, and breathing problems in children and young people. It usually spreads through coughs, sneezes, or contact with contaminated surfaces—much like the common cold.

Who can get it?

hMPV can affect people of all ages, but **infants, toddlers, and children with weakened immune systems or existing lung or heart problems** are more likely to become unwell.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of hMPV often resemble a cold or flu and may include:

- Runny nose
- Cough
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Wheezing
- Difficulty breathing (in some cases)
- Reduced feeding or irritability in babies

Symptoms usually appear **3 to 6 days after exposure** to the virus.

How is it diagnosed?

Doctors may suspect hMPV based on your child's symptoms and time of year. If needed, a swab from the nose or throat can confirm the diagnosis. Chest X-rays and blood tests are only used in more serious cases.



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How is it treated?

There is **no specific antiviral treatment** for hMPV. Most children recover at home with rest and care. Treatment focuses on relieving symptoms:

- Offer **fluids** regularly to avoid dehydration
- Use **paracetamol or ibuprofen** (age-appropriate) to reduce fever or discomfort
- Keep your child **comfortable and calm**
- Ensure they get plenty of **rest**

Children with breathing difficulties may need to go to hospital for support such as oxygen, nebulisers, or fluids.

Enclosed is a link to further parent information:

Parent information on supportive measures during infections:

<https://drwmuller.com/information-for-parents-carers/>

See: Infection: Acute infection - what can I do?

When should I seek medical help?

Seek urgent medical advice if your child:

- Is breathing fast or struggling to breathe
- Has blue lips or skin
- Is unusually drowsy or difficult to wake
- Is feeding poorly or not at all
- Is having fewer wet nappies or not passing urine

If in doubt, contact your GP, NHS 111, or attend your local A&E.

Enclosed is a link to further parent information:

Parent information on “My child is unwell – When should I see a doctor?”

<https://drwmuller.com/information-for-parents-carers/>

See: Emergencies: “When do I need to see a doctor urgently?”

Is it contagious?

Yes. hMPV spreads easily, especially in schools, nurseries, and households. It can remain infectious on surfaces for several hours.



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To reduce spread:

- Encourage regular **handwashing**
- Keep your child at home when they're unwell
- Clean shared surfaces and toys often
- Teach children to cover their coughs and sneezes

How long does it last?

Most children recover within **7 to 10 days**, although a cough can linger for a few weeks. Children with asthma or other lung conditions may have longer or more severe symptoms.

Can it happen more than once?

Yes. Like many respiratory viruses, children can get hMPV more than once, though future infections are often milder.

If you have any questions or are worried about your child, please speak to your GP, health visitor, or local paediatric team.

Written by: Dr W Muller

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