

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Parainfluenza

## What is parainfluenza?

Parainfluenza is a common virus. Like a cold, it causes a stuffy, runny nose, a cough and ear infections in infants and children. Most children catch this virus by the time they are five years old.

Parainfluenza is not the flu.

## When do you see parainfluenza?

We see parainfluenza in the fall and early winter.

## How do I know if my child has parainfluenza?

It is hard to tell by looking at the child, since parainfluenza has the same stuffy nose and cough of other viruses. Only a lab test can tell if it is the parainfluenza virus. This test to see if the germ is parainfluenza is only necessary if your child is very sick.



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# Is getting parainfluenza worse than getting a cold?

Most of the time parainfluenza is like having a cold that lasts for one or two weeks.

Sometimes, infants and children with parainfluenza get so sick that they need to be in the hospital. The parainfluenza germ can cause croup, pneumonia and bronchiolitis.

Children who get very sick from parainfluenza may have been born early (premature babies), are less than six months old, or have heart or lung problems.

## When should I call the doctor?

If your child has trouble breathing or is breathing very fast call your doctor.

If your child's breathing makes it hard for him or her to eat or sleep, call your doctor. This is especially important if your child is less than six months old, was born early or has another medical problem, too. If your child has a fever or ear ache, call your doctor. If your child is blue around the lips, has trouble breathing, does not want to eat or acts very tired, call your doctor right away.

## What is the treatment for parainfluenza?

Most of the time, parainfluenza is treated just like a cold. A very sick child may be given oxygen and breathing treatments.

## How can I keep my child from getting parainfluenza?

People with parainfluenza spread it to others around them. Because parainfluenza is so common in the winter, it is hard to avoid. If your child is less

than six months old or was born early, stay away from crowded areas like malls and stores, as much as possible. Remember, parainfluenza can look like a cold in older children and adults.

Do not let anyone with a cold hold your baby or talk close to your baby's face. Anyone with a cold or parainfluenza should wash hands well, throw out used tissues and cover sneezes. Many illnesses spread by touching things or people with germs, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Good hand washing stops germs from spreading this way.

## Now that you've read this:

Tell your nurse or doctor when you would call the doctor. (Check when done).



If you have any questions or concerns,

call your child's doctor or  call \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to know more about child health and illness,  
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
602-546-1400  
888-908-5437  
[www.phoenixchildrens.com](http://www.phoenixchildrens.com)

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