

# Adenovirus

## Information for Parents and/or Care givers

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Welcome to the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network. This information sheet is designed to answer any questions you may have about your child having a positive test for Adenovirus.

### What is Adenovirus?

Adenoviruses are a family of viruses that can infect people of all ages. Most Adenovirus infections do not cause any symptoms and the body clears the virus over time without causing any disease. Only 1 third of known Adenoviral strains are associated with any symptoms at all. For this reason a positive test does NOT mean that the Adenovirus is the cause of the illness as many healthy people carry Adenovirus at any one time.

Some Adenoviral infections affect the upper respiratory tract. They are slightly more common in the late winter, spring, and early summer months, but can develop at other times of the year as well. Different adenoviruses cause illness at different areas in the body. Some strains cause infection of the lining of the eyelids, breathing passages, and lungs, while others affect the bowel or bladder.

### Is Adenovirus Infectious?

Adenovirus is highly infectious. The adenoviruses are spread by person-to-person contact, including through secretions that are sneezed or coughed into the air or onto hands and faces. Some adenoviruses are present in the bowels and stools. A person who gets the virus on his hands while bathing or using the bathroom can spread these viruses. The virus can go from one set of hands to the next and then into the mouth or nose or onto the eyes.

Children who are in child care, especially those from 6 months to 2 years of age, have a greater chance of getting these viruses. The viruses are also spread in schools or summer camps.

**Frequent hand washing** can help reduce the chances of spreading adenovirus infections. Toys and other objects handled by infected children should be kept clean and disinfected. Keep children with infections away from group settings until symptoms pass.

### Incubation period

Once your child is exposed to the virus, there is an incubation period of 2 -14 days before your child has symptoms.

The incubation period for gastroenteritis can range from 3 – 10 days.

### Signs and Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of adenoviral infections vary depending on which part of the body is affected, The signs and symptoms of respiratory adenovirus infections may be similar to those of the common cold.

Sick children may develop a stuffy or runny nose as well as a sore throat (pharyngitis); eyelid lining inflammation (conjunctivitis); infection of the small breathing tubes in the lungs (bronchiolitis); pneumonia; a middle ear infection or a fever. Some youngsters may have a harsh cough similar to that of whooping cough.

Children infected with some strains of adenovirus develop inflammation of the bowels, which can cause fever, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal cramps (gastroenteritis).

One strain of this virus can also infect the bladder and cause blood in the urine and pain while urinating.

A rare strain of the virus can cause infection in or around the brain (meningitis or encephalitis).

### Diagnosis

Adenoviral illnesses often resemble certain bacterial infections, which can be treated with antibiotics. But antibiotics do not work against viruses.

To diagnose the true cause of the symptoms so that proper treatment can be prescribed, your doctor may want to test:

- A respiratory throat swab.
- An eye swab.
- A stool (faecal) sample.
- A blood sample
- A urine sample.

The doctor will decide on a course of action based on your child's condition.

## Treatment/Care at Home

In most cases, a child's body, with the help of the immune system, will get rid of the virus over time. Antibiotics cannot treat a viral infection, so it is best to just make your child more comfortable.

Make sure your child:

- Gets extra rest
- Drinks plenty of fluids
- Has simple analgesia such as paracetamol to ease the pain of a sore throat

If your child has a respiratory infection or fever, getting plenty of rest and taking in extra fluids are essential. If your child is under 6 months old, you may need to clear his or her nose with nasal saline drops. Please ask your doctor or nurse for more information.

If your child has diarrhoea or is vomiting, increase fluid intake and check with the doctor about giving an oral rehydration solution to prevent dehydration.

To relieve the symptoms of conjunctivitis, use warm compresses and, if your doctor recommends them, a topical eye ointment or drops.

## When to seek help?

- A fever lasting more than a few days
- If the symptoms seem to get worse after a week
- If your child has breathing problems
- If your child is under 3 months old
- If any swelling and redness around the eye becomes more severe or painful
- When there are any signs of dehydration – tired, lethargic, flat, vomiting, not able to keep fluids down, producing less urine or tears, having a dry mouth.
- You know your child best. If your child appears to be severely unwell, please go and see your doctor.

## Admission to Hospital (or Coming to Hospital)

Children with adenoviral infections do not usually require hospitalisation. However, babies and young children may not be able to drink enough fluids to replace what they lose during vomiting or diarrhoea and so might need to be hospitalised to treat or prevent dehydration. Also, young (especially premature) infants with pneumonia usually need to be hospitalised.

## Duration

Most adenoviral infections last a few days to a week. However:

- Severe respiratory infections may last longer and have a longer lasting cough.
- Pneumonia can last anywhere from 2-4 weeks
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) can last several days to a week
- Gastroenteritis caused by adenovirus can last up to 2 weeks.

## For more information

- See your family doctor
- For 24 hour health advice call - Health direct Australia 1800 022 222
- Parent Helpline 1300 364 100
- Local emergency department

## For more information

Flinders Womens and Childrens  
Flinders Medical Centre  
Bedford Park  
South Australia 5042  
Telephone: 08 8204 5511  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)



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