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Human metapneumovirus infections in children.

Heikkinen T, Osterback R, Peltola V, Jartti T, Vainionpää R.

Department of Pediatrics, Turku University Hospital, Turku, Finland.
terho.heikkinen@utu.fi

Human metapneumovirus (hMPV) is an important cause of lower respiratory tract infections in hospitalized children, but the age-related incidence and effect of hMPV in unselected children in the community have not been evaluated. We studied a cohort of 1,338 children <13 years of age throughout 1 respiratory season in Finland during 2000-2001. We examined children and obtained a nasal swab for viral detection at any sign of respiratory infection. hMPV was detected in 47 (3.5%) of the 1,338 children. The age-related incidence of hMPV infection was highest (7.6%) in children <2 years of age, in whom hMPV accounted for 1.7% of all infections during the season. During the epidemic peak, hMPV caused 7.1% of all respiratory infections in the cohort. Acute otitis media developed in 61% of hMPV-infected children <3 years of age. Our findings demonstrate that the effect of hMPV in the community is greatest in children <2 years of age.

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