



# RSV (RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS)

## WHAT IS RSV?

RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially in infants and older adults. RSV infections are the leading cause of hospitalization in U.S. infants in fall and winter months.

## WHO CAN GET RSV?

Almost everyone gets RSV every year. It tends to be mild if you have had it before, having prior immunity.

## WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF RSV?

People show symptoms about 4 to 6 days after getting exposed to a sick person.

Symptoms include: runny nose, decreased appetite, coughing, sneezing, fever, wheezing. However, some adults can get RSV infection and have minimal symptoms.

Very young babies may have the following symptoms: Irritability, decreased activity, eating or drinking less, and difficulty breathing, with a drop in oxygen level.

## HOW IS RSV SPREAD?

People with RSV are contagious for 3 to 8 days. They can spread RSV a day or more before showing signs of the illness. Infants and those with weak immune systems can spread the virus for as long as 4 weeks.

You can get RSV by:

- Having the virus touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when infected secretions are on your hands from someones cough or sneeze.
- Having direct contact with the virus, like kissing an infected child.
- Touching a surface that has the virus on it, like a doorknob, and then touching your face.

## HOW IS RSV DIAGNOSED?

A rapid test is available in your healthcare providers office, urgent care, or the hospital ER.

## HOW IS RSV TREATED?

Antiviral medication is not routinely recommended to treat RSV. Most RSV infections go away on their own in a week or two. However, RSV can cause severe illness in some people. Infants, young children, and older adults (especially those with asthma) are at increased risk of severe RSV. Some people with RSV infection, especially infants younger than 6 months of age and older adults, may need to be hospitalized if they are having trouble breathing or are dehydrated.

Take steps to relieve mild symptoms:

- **Manage fever and pain** with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Never give aspirin to children.
- **Drink enough fluids.** It is important for people with RSV infection to drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration (loss of body fluids).
- **Clear upper airway secretions with saline nose washes.**
- **Talk to your health care provider** before giving your child nonprescription cold medicines. Some medicines contain ingredients that are not good for children.
- If an infant is so focused on getting the next breath than feeding, it is time to be seen.

More information about RSV including prevention and diagnosis can be found on the [CDC website](#).

## HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT RSV?

RSV season usually starts in the fall and peaks in the winter.

Like other respiratory viruses, you can limit the spread of RSV.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that people touch frequently.
- Stay at home when you're sick.
- RSV vaccinations are now available for adults 60 years and older, pregnant people from week 32-week 36 of pregnancy given Sept thru Jan and one dose for infants up to age 8 months or 8-19 months who are at increased risk for severe RSV disease and entering their second RSV season.



## WHEN SHOULD I STAY HOME FROM WORK, SCHOOL, OR CHILDCARE?

### YOU SHOULD NOT ATTEND WORK, SCHOOL, OR CHILDCARE IF ONE OF THE FOLLOWING APPLIES:

- They have a fever (100.4F or higher) along with other RSV symptoms.
- They do not feel well enough to participate in regular activities.