

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



Department of Health & Human Services

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RSV

(Respiratory Syncytial Virus)

What is RSV?

RSV (*Respiratory Syncytial Virus*) is a virus that causes bronchiolitis, an infection in the airways of the lung.

Who can get RSV?

People of any age can get RSV infection. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children under 1 year of age. Almost all children have been infected with the virus by age 2. RSV usually occurs in the winter and spring months, from November to April. Premature infants and adults with compromised immune systems or those 65 years of age and older are at increased risk for developing serious illness.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

Symptoms usually begin 2-8 days after exposure. They include cough, sneezing, runny nose, fever, and loss of appetite. Wheezing may also occur. People usually recover fully in 1-2 weeks.

How is RSV spread?

RSV is spread from person to person by droplets from the nose, throat and mouth through sneezing, coughing, and speaking. Infection can also occur from direct contact with nasal or oral secretions through kissing the face of a child with RSV. Sometimes people become infected by touching an object with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How is RSV treated?

Your doctor can advise you on how to make a person with RSV more comfortable and if hospitalization is needed. There is a medication called Ribavirin that may be used in the hospital to treat severe infection.

How can RSV be prevented?

There is no vaccine currently available to prevent RSV. Practice good hygiene:

- Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hard surfaces and toys with soap and water or disinfectant.
- Avoid sharing items contaminated with saliva such as cups, eating utensils, pacifiers, gum, and candy.
- Refrain from kissing others.

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HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
 - backs of hands
 - wrists
 - between fingers
 - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

For more information on RSV, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

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