

# WHAT IS RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus is one of the most common causes of childhood illness and can cause respiratory illnesses in all age groups. RSV infection most commonly presents cold-like symptoms but can cause serious lower respiratory infections such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia.



## WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF RSV?

Typically a cough develops followed by sneezing, fever, and wheezing. Symptoms usually appear in stages and not all at once. In very young infants, the only symptoms of RSV may be irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties.

People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within four to six days after exposure which may include:

- Runny nose
- Decreased appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing

## WHO IS AT RISK?

RSV is particularly dangerous in very young infants and can cause severe disease in those considered at high risk, such as:

- Premature infants
- Infants, especially those ages 6 months and younger
- Children younger than 2 years of age with chronic lung disease or congenital heart disease
- Children with suppressed immune systems
- Children who have neuromuscular disorders, including those who have difficulty swallowing or clearing mucus secretions

Adults can also be infected by RSV and display mild or no symptoms. Those at high risk for severe illness from RSV include adults:

- Age 65 and older
- With chronic lung or heart disease
- With weakened immune systems

RSV in adults can sometimes lead to serious conditions such as:

- Asthma
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Congestive heart failure

## WHAT TIME OF YEAR IS RSV MOST PREVALENT?

Typically, there's an uptick in RSV cases beginning in the fall and peaking in the winter. The timing and severity of RSV in each given community varies from year to year.

## TESTING

Testing is available for infants, children, and adults. Contact your primary care provider to learn more.

## CARE

Most healthy infants and young children infected with RSV do not need hospitalization and will recover fully within one to two weeks. However, when needed, some require hospitalization and may receive oxygen, intubation, and mechanical ventilation.

There is currently no treatment for RSV infection, but researchers are working on vaccines and medicines to help with the virus.

Ways to help relieve symptoms include:

- Managing fever and pain with over-the-counter medicine such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Never give aspirin to children.
- Drinking enough fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Talking to your primary care provider before giving your child nonprescription medicines. Some medications contain ingredients that are not safe for children.

## AVOID THE SPREAD OF RSV

To avoid RSV transmission:

- Wash your hands often
- Cover your cough and sneezes
- If you have symptoms, avoid kissing, sharing utensils, and holding/shaking hands of those at risk
- Regularly sanitize highly used surfaces such as doorknobs and other shared surfaces

Source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)