



# DISEASE PREVENTION

## Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

### What is RSV?

RSV is a respiratory illness caused by a virus named Respiratory Syncytial Virus. Most people recover from mild, cold-like symptoms in a week or two, but for some babies and certain adults RSV can be dangerous.

### When is RSV Season?

RSV season generally starts during fall and peaks in the winter, but the timing and severity of the season can vary from year to year.

### How is RSV spread?

RSV can spread when someone talks, coughs, or sneezes, sending tiny droplets into the air. If these droplets get into someone else's mouth or nose, they can get sick too. You can also catch RSV by touching surfaces that have the virus on them and then touching your face.

### Who gets RSV?

People are typically infected with RSV for the first time as an infant or toddler and nearly all children are infected before their second birthday. However, repeat infections may occur throughout life, and people of any age can be infected.

### When and for how long is a person able to spread RSV?

People are usually contagious for 3 to 8 days and may become contagious a day or two before they start showing signs of illness.

However, some infants, and people with weakened immune systems, can continue to spread the virus even after they stop showing symptoms, for as long as 4 weeks.

### How soon after you are exposed to the RSV do symptoms appear?

People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within 4 to 6 days after getting infected. Symptoms usually appear in stages and not all at once.



## What are the symptoms of the RSV?



People infected with RSV usually have mild symptoms and are able to manage their symptoms on their own.

Symptoms of RSV infection usually include the following:

- Congested or runny nose
- Sneezing
- Headache
- Coughing
- Low-grade fever
- Sore Throat



Some people are at higher risk for serious complications from RSV and should talk to a healthcare provider right away if experiencing any RSV symptoms. Taking antiviral medicine to treat RSV may shorten the length of your illness and help prevent more-serious problems.

In rare cases, individuals may develop serious complications with severe symptoms that require immediate medical attention.

Emergency symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Wheezing
- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- Severe cough
- Bluish color of the skin

In infants, additional emergency symptoms may include:

- Poor feeding
- Short, shallow & rapid breathing
- Unusual tiredness
- Struggling to breathe – chest muscles and skin pull inward with each breath
- Irritability

## What can be done to prevent the spread of the RSV?



1. Practice good hand, coughing, and sneezing hygiene.

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing, sneezing, or touching surfaces in public areas. When soap and water are not available, hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of tissues properly and wash your hands immediately afterward.

2. Stay home when sick.

- Return to normal activities when your symptoms are better overall, and you have not had a fever for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.
- It is recommended you wear a mask for 5 days without a fever when returning to normal activities.

3. You may be recommended to receive an immunization or monoclonal antibodies in the fall.

- For adults 60 years and older, you can be immunized against RSV.
- People who are 32–36 weeks pregnant can be immunized against RSV to protect their babies from severe RSV.
- For infants, monoclonal antibodies are now available. Monoclonal antibodies provide protection during that RSV season.

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Information adapted from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC): [www.cdc.gov/RSV](http://www.cdc.gov/RSV)

