

# DISEASE PREVENTION

## Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)



Whitman County  
Public Health

### What is RSV?



A highly contagious illness that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover 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. The timing and severity of RSV season in a given community can vary from year to year.

### How is RSV spread?



RSV mainly spreads from person to person by droplets. This happens when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are sent through the air and land on the mouth, nose, or eyes of people nearby. RSV may also spread when a person touches droplets on an object or surface and then touches their mouth, nose, or eyes before washing their hands.

### Who gets the 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.

Symptoms in older, healthy children and adults are generally less severe than among infants and older adults.



## What are the symptoms of the RSV?



Symptoms of RSV infection usually include the following:

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

In severe cases, infection can spread to the lower respiratory tract, causing pneumonia or bronchiolitis — inflammation in the lungs. Emergency symptoms may include:

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

Additional emergency symptoms in infants may include:

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

## What is the illness severity associated with RSV?



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

If you experience emergency symptoms of the flu, get medical care right away.

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



- For adults 60 years and older, you can now be immunized against RSV.
- For infants, monoclonal antibodies are now available. Monoclonal antibodies are different than immunizations; the protection they provide wanes over time. They provide an extra layer of defense that helps fight RSV infections and protect children from getting very sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick. Also, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands after disposing of used tissues. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or sanitizers may be used.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are frequently spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

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

