

# RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV) FACT SHEET

## 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 for infants and older adults. Some adults may be more at risk for severe RSV disease including: older adults (especially those 65 years and older) and adults with chronic lung or heart disease or weakened immune systems. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung) and pneumonia (infection of the lungs) in children younger than 1 year of age in the United States. Almost all children are infected at least once by two years of age.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms usually occur within 4-6 days after becoming infected. These symptoms may appear in stages and not all at once. **Contact your healthcare provider if symptoms occur.**

Symptoms may include:

- Runny nose, sneezing
- Loss of appetite
- Cough
- Fever
- Wheezing

*In young infants with RSV, the only symptoms may be irritability, decreased activity, decreased appetite or breathing difficulties.*

**Call your healthcare provider or seek medical attention if you or your child is having difficulty or problems breathing, not drinking enough fluids, or experiencing any concerning or worsening symptoms.**

## How can it be prevented?

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash hands often using soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and help young children do the same.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils, with others.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects including toys and doorknobs.
- **Stay home when you or your children are sick. Contact your healthcare provider.**

More information: <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>

This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider. For more information call your healthcare provider.

3/2023

## How is it spread?

- By an infected person coughing or sneezing
- By touching something with droplets from a cough or sneeze on it, and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- By having close contact with an infected person (like kissing the face of a child with RSV)

RSV can survive for many hours on hard surfaces such as tables and crib rails. It typically lives on soft surfaces such as tissues and hands for shorter amounts of time.

People infected with RSV are usually contagious for 3 to 8 days. However, some infants, and people with weakened immune systems, can continue to spread the virus even after they stop showing symptoms, for up to 4 weeks.

## How is it treated?

Most RSV infections go away on their own in a week or two.

Your healthcare provider can advise you on how to make a person with RSV more comfortable.

## What are the serious complications from RSV?

Some infants and children may develop more serious infections from RSV such as pneumonia or bronchiolitis.

Premature infants, children under 1 year of age, and children with heart or lung disease or weak immune systems have a greater risk of developing respiratory complications. Children with severe disease or immune compromised children may require specialized therapy or hospitalization.

If you are concerned about your child's risk for RSV, talk to your healthcare provider. There is no vaccine yet to prevent RSV.

