

What is RSV?

- RSV is a virus that infects the lungs and breathing passages.
- It can infect a person several times.
- It is a major cause of respiratory (lung) illness in young children.
- In adults, it usually causes only the common cold.

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Who can get RSV?

- It is most common in infants 2-6 months old.
- Children who were born early or children with lung, heart, and immune problems are at greater risk of a severe RSV infection.
- Almost 100% of children in daycare get RSV before age 1.
- It is most common from late fall to early spring. It is rare in summer.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

Children under 3 years old

- RSV could cause bronchiolitis, otitis media (ear infection), or pneumonia.
- Symptoms could include high fever, bad cough, and wheezing.
- In more severe cases, it could cause difficulty breathing. Signs are wheezing, a blue color to the lips or skin, and the chest sucks in with each breath.

Children over 3 years old

- RSV usually causes symptoms of a cold, with stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, mild headache, mild cough, and low fever.

Is RSV contagious?

- Yes. RSV is very contagious.
- It can be passed from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or contact with infected items.
- The virus can survive on a surface for hours.
- If the virus gets on your hands, you can be infected if you touch your nose, mouth, or eyes.
- It can be passed between children at school and carried home to infect others in the household.
- It is also easily passed in hospitals between patients and staff.
- Your child may be contagious even if she does not have symptoms.
- Children with RSV do not need to stay home from school or daycare. It usually doesn't prevent the spread of infection to other children.

How is RSV treated?

- Children need to stay home only if they feel too ill to do normal activities.
- There is no cure. Antibiotics will not work.
- The goal is to help children feel better while their bodies fight the infection.
- Putting a cool-mist humidifier in the room often helps children breath easier.
- Children should drink plenty of fluids.
- If your infant has a stuffy nose, saline (salt-water) nose drops might help. Drops can be found at the store. Ask the pharmacist for help.
- Use a suction bulb to clear the nose.
- Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) can be used to treat fever, headache, aches and pains, and sore throat. Use the right amount of medication based on weight, not age.

- **Do not give children aspirin or medicine with aspirin in it.** It could cause brain or liver damage. Talk to your doctor first.

How long does RSV last?

- It usually lasts 7 to 14 days. It could last up to 3 weeks.

How can RSV be prevented?

- Wash your hands often, especially after being around someone with an RSV infection.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes after being around an infected person.
- Throw used tissues away after use.
- Keep infected children away from infants until symptoms are gone.
- Premature infants and children with chronic lung disease are at high risk for a severe RSV infection.
- Children at high risk can be given a shot. It is called Synagis (TM). It helps protect infants from infection. The shot does not last a long time. It has to be given about once a month to work.

When should I call the doctor?

- Call if your infant has symptoms of an RSV infection.
- Call if your child has a fever above 101 degrees F (or 38.3 degrees C).
- Call if a cough lasts more than 4 days or child is coughing up yellow, green, or gray mucus.
- Call if your child has thick nasal discharge (out of the nose) that is yellow, green, or gray.
- Call if your child has chest pain, difficulty breathing, fast breathing, or a blue color to the lips or skin.
- Call if your child is unusually tired.
- Call if you have questions or concerns about your child's symptoms.
- Ask your doctor if your infant is at high risk for a severe RSV infection. Should she get a shot to protect her against infection?

Quick Answers

- RSV is a virus that infects the lungs and breathing passages.
- It is most common in infants 2-6 months old.
- Symptoms are similar to a common cold and could include stuffy nose, fever, cough, and in some cases, wheezing or an ear infection.
- It can be passed from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or contact with infected items.
- Antibiotics will not help. The goal is to help children feel better while their bodies fight the infection.
- It usually lasts 7 to 14 days. It could last up to 3 weeks.
- Wash your hands often to prevent the spread of infection.
- Call the doctor if your infant has symptoms of an RSV infection.

References

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