



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) FAQ

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Quick Guide

- ❑ Respiratory Syncytial Virus, or RSV, is a **common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms in young children.**
- ❑ RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults.
- ❑ RSV is common and almost all children will have it by age 2. It is typical to get it multiple times in one's life.
- ❑ RSV is the most frequent cause of lower respiratory (lung) infections, such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia, in children under 1 year of age.

Causes	RSV is caused by viruses. A person infected with one of these viruses is contagious, which means that they can pass the virus to other people.
Incubation period	The usual period from initial infection to the time symptoms appear (incubation period) is 2 to 8 days after exposure for a person to develop symptoms.
Symptoms	<p>Symptoms usually appear in stages and not all at once. In very young infants with RSV, the only symptoms may be irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common symptoms of RSV infection include runny nose, sneezing, decrease in appetite, fever, coughing and sometimes wheezing
Duration of illness	Most individuals recover in 8 to 15 days.
Mode of Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread by respiratory droplets either directly through the air or indirectly by hands, tissues, or mouthed toys. • RSV in respiratory droplets can live on surfaces for many hours. • Most outbreaks occur in winter or early spring. • Contact with respiratory droplets containing virus particles after a sick person coughs or sneezes.
Diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A health care provider can take a swab of the nose or throat to find the virus. Blood tests may also be done to identify an RSV infection.
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people with RSV recover without treatment and on their own in 8 to 15 days. • Keep children comfortable, allow them to rest, ensure proper fluid intake, and check on them often. These are all that are needed for most cases. • Fever reducing medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, may be given if the child has a fever. • Children younger than 3 months with a fever should be seen by a health care provider. • Children with severe RSV symptoms may need to be hospitalized. • Talk with your child's health care provider if you have any concerns about your child's symptoms. • Remember, do not give aspirin to a child with fever, as this has been associated with Reye's Syndrome.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The virus is easily removed with soap and water. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Especially after sneezing, coughing, or nose wiping. ○ After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing ○ Before and after caring for someone who is sick • Help children wash their hands. Teach them how to wash their hands and make sure they wash them often. • Throw away used tissues and teach children to cover their mouths and nose when they cough or sneeze. • Clean with soap and water and disinfect surfaces. • Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups, eating utensils, and toys, with others. • Thoroughly clean toys or other objects children put into their mouths. • Consider changing clothes after caring for someone with RSV symptoms to help prevent spreading the virus to others.

What to do if you or your child has RSV

- If you have RSV, the best thing to do is to stay at home until you're feeling better. There's no cure for it, so you have to let it run its course.
- To help ease symptoms:
 - Manage fever and pain with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. (Never give aspirin to children.)
 - Drink enough fluids. It is important for people with RSV infection to drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration (loss of body fluids).
 - Talk to your healthcare provider before giving your child nonprescription cold medicines. Some medicines contain ingredients that are not good for children.
- Keep your child home from daycare until they are feeling better.

Infection Prevention Practices

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, not your hands
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils, with others
- Clean frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs and mobile devices.
- Dispose of tissues properly.

When to Seek Medical Advice

Call your healthcare provider if your child is having difficulty breathing, not drinking enough fluids, or experiencing worsening symptoms.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

CDC:

- [Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection \(RSV\)](#)