

RSV

What is RSV?

RSV stands for **R**espiratory **S**yncytial **V**irus, the most widespread cause of respiratory (lung) infections in children younger than 1 year of age.

When does RSV occur?

RSV is a widespread virus and most children have been infected by their second birthday. RSV is most common in the fall, winter, and early spring, however the timing and severity can vary from year to year.

What are the symptoms?

RSV causes fever, runny nose, cough, poor eating, and sometimes ear infections. In most young children, it results in a mild respiratory infection, like a common cold. RSV in children doesn't usually need a hospital stay or specific treatment. A child with RSV may have a low-grade fever for several days, cold-like symptoms that may last 1 to 2 weeks, and a cough that sometimes lasts more than 2 weeks. RSV in older children and adults is most often very mild and causes cold-like symptoms.

Can RSV be serious?

Yes. A baby or young child may develop a more severe form of the disease which, may result in a more serious infection in the lungs. Symptoms include trouble breathing, fast breathing, wheezing (whistling sounds) and/or a harsh cough. These children need medical attention and may be admitted to the hospital. Most commonly, the ones who need to be in the hospital are infants or children with other health problems like heart or lung disease. Exposure to passive smoke (cigarette, cigar, pipe, fireplace, wood stove) can also make lung infections in infants and children worse.

How is RSV treated?

Most cases of RSV do not need any specific treatment. Children with respiratory infections need to be given plenty of liquids to help keep their mucus thinner. Some children may need medicine (Tylenol, Ibuprofen like products) to keep their fever down. Don't give your child aspirin. Keep the nose free of mucous by using some saltwater drops followed by bulb suctioning. The three most important things to be done for RSV are: 1) keep the fever down, 2) drink lots of liquids, and 3) keep the nose unstuffed.

For some children, those three steps are not enough. These children need more medical care, such as oxygen, IV fluids, and perhaps other respiratory and/or medical treatments. Antibiotics don't work on RSV and shouldn't be given unless the child gets bacterial infection as well as the RSV.

Why is my child in Isolation Precautions?

RSV is spread from person to person by contact (touching, kissing, and shaking hands). It is also spread by sneezing or coughing. Therefore, to prevent spreading RSV to staff and other patients in the hospital, your child will be placed in Droplet Precautions. This means that staff and visitors who enter the room and touch your child or things in the room will need to wear a gown, mask and gloves. Your child may not leave the room and you are asked not to visit other patients. Though we do not require parents, brothers and sisters to wear the gown, mask and gloves while visiting we do ask that you **wash your hands well with soap and water or use the waterless hand hygiene product EVERY time you leave the room.**

Can my child get RSV again?

Although a child can get a second RSV infection, it probably will be much milder than the first time.

Author: Infectious Diseases | Approved by Patient Education Committee | Valid through 2017

The information presented is intended for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of your personal doctor's advice and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. The information should not be used in place of a visit, call or consultation or advice of your doctor or other health care provider.