

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)



Dear parent or guardian:

Your child recently may have been exposed to **respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)**. RSV is one of the viruses that causes the common cold. It can also cause other respiratory infections and pneumonia.

If your child is too sick to take part in normal activities, they should stay home from school or childcare.

Symptoms

Most children and adults will experience common cold symptoms.

Infants may experience irritability, poor feeding, and lethargy. Immediately contact a healthcare provider if they have rapid or labored breathing or turn blue when they cough or stop breathing for brief periods (cyanosis).

Children with weakened immune systems, prematurity, or heart or lung problems may get severely sick.

Spread

A person can be contagious before they show symptoms. It can take 2–8 days for symptoms to show. The virus spreads through mucous from the nose or mouth. The virus can live on surfaces for many hours and 30 minutes or more on hands.

Diagnosis and treatment

A healthcare provider can test for RSV or make a diagnosis based on the symptoms. Most RSV infections go away on their own. Give comfort and ensure children drink enough fluids.

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

Prevention

Good hand hygiene is the best way to prevent spreading RSV:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Teach children to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue of their elbow.
- Throw tissues away after each use.
- Wash your hands after using a tissue.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Sanitize frequently touched surfaces often.

Older adults, infants 8 months or younger, and toddlers with certain chronic conditions should get RSV vaccine. Contact your healthcare provider for more info about RSV vaccine.

Learn more

For more info, contact a healthcare provider.