

Respiratory Syncytial Virus

What is a respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infection? An RSV infection is a condition that causes swelling in child's lower airway and lungs. The swelling may cause child to have trouble breathing. The RSV virus is the most common cause of lung infections in infants and young children. An RSV infection can happen at any age, but happens more often in children younger than 2 years. An RSV infection usually lasts 5 to 15 days. RSV infection is most common in the fall and winter. An RSV infection often leads to other lung problems, such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia.

How does the virus spread? RSV is highly contagious. Germs may be spread to others through coughing, sneezing, or close contact.

What increases risk for a severe RSV infection?

- Being born prematurely (less than 37 weeks) or at a low weight (less than 5 pounds)
- Age younger than 6 months
- A medical condition, such as a heart problem or cystic fibrosis
- A weak immune system caused by certain conditions, such as HIV or a bone marrow transplant
- Exposure to high levels of secondhand cigarette smoke

What are the early signs and symptoms of an RSV infection?

- Runny nose
- A cough or wheezing
- Fever
- Breathing faster than usual
- Not eating or sleeping as well as usual



How is an RSV infection diagnosed?

A Nasal swab and or Nasal drainage may be suctioned from nose and tested for infection.

How is RSV treated?

Do not give over-the-counter cough or cold medicines to children under 4 years.

- **Acetaminophen** may help decrease child's pain and fever.
- **NSAIDs**, such as ibuprofen, help decrease swelling, pain, and fever. **Do not give these medicines to children under 6 months of age without direction from your child's healthcare provider.**

Treatment

- **Rest** can help child's body fight the infection.
- **Give child plenty of liquids.** Liquids will help thin and loosen mucus so your child can cough it up. Do not give liquids with caffeine. Caffeine can increase risk for dehydration.
- **Use a cool mist humidifier in child's room.**
- **Keep child away from smoke.** Nicotine and other chemicals in cigarettes and cigars can make child's symptoms worse.
- **Wash your hands and your child's hands often.**