

UNDERSTANDING RSV IN INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Each year in the United States, an estimated 58,000-80,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized due to respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). RSV peaks during the fall and winter seasons. It can cause severe illness among infants and young children, even if their initial symptoms seem mild.

If you have an infant or young child, it's important to be on the lookout for RSV symptoms. Common symptoms may include:



Runny nose

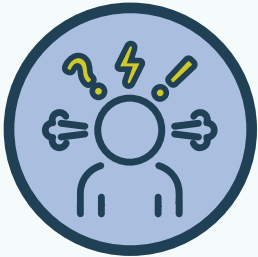


Reduced appetite



Coughing, which may progress to wheezing or difficulty breathing

In very young infants (those less than 6 months old), RSV symptoms may include:



Irritability



Decreased activity levels



Reduced appetite



Apnea (pauses in breathing for more than 10 seconds)

If you have an infant or young child that was born prematurely; is younger than 6 months old; has chronic lung disease, congenital heart disease or neuromuscular disorders; or lives with a weakened immune system, they may be at greater risk of becoming severely ill from RSV. Almost all children experience an RSV infection by the time they reach 2 years old. While most cases of RSV cause mild, cold-like symptoms, some can result in severe illnesses, such as:



Bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung)



Pneumonia (infection of the lungs)

Between 1 and 2 out of every 100 children younger than 6 months old who become infected with RSV may need to be hospitalized. Those who are hospitalized may require oxygen, IV fluids or mechanical ventilation. Among those hospitalized, most improve with this type of supportive care and are discharged in a few days.

Consider the following precautions to help keep your child healthy and prevent the spread of RSV:



Wash your hands and the child's hands often.



Keep your hands off your face. Don't touch the child's face with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact with sick people.



Cover your coughs and sneezes.



Clean and disinfect surfaces frequently.



Stay home when you are sick.

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