



RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS INFECTION (RSV)

WHAT IS RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung), and pneumonia (infection of the lungs), in children younger than 1 year of age in the United States. It is also a significant cause of respiratory illness in older adults.

HOW DO YOU GET RSV?

RSV can spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. You can get infected if you get droplets from the cough or sneeze in your eyes, nose, or mouth, or if you touch a surface that has the virus on it, like a doorknob, and then touch your face before washing your hands. Additionally, it can spread through direct contact with the virus, like kissing the face of a child with RSV.

SYMPTOMS

People infected with RSV are usually contagious for 3 to 8 days. However, some infants, and people with weakened immune systems, can continue to spread the virus even after they stop showing symptoms, for as long as 4 weeks. Symptoms may include:

- Runny nose
- Decrease in appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing

These 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. Almost all children will have had an RSV infection by their second birthday. People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within 4 to 6 days after getting infected.

PREVENTION

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, not your hands
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils, with others
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched or contaminated surfaces. RSV can survive for many hours on hard surfaces.
- People with cold-like symptoms should not interact with children at high risk for severe RSV disease.