

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

- Because you or your child may have been exposed to Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).
 - For informational purposes only.
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General Information About Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

What is Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)?

- It is a respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms in young children.
- It can be serious, especially for infants and older adults.
- It is common and almost all children will have it by age 2.
- It is most common in winter or early spring.
- It is the most frequent cause of lower respiratory (lung) infections, such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia, in children under 1 year of age.

Who can get it?

- Anyone can get RSV, even if they've had it before.
- Some groups are at higher risk for getting very sick or developing medical problems, including:
 - Premature and very young infants
 - People over 50 years
 - Pregnant people
 - People with weakened immune systems or chronic health conditions
- **People in a higher risk group (see above) should contact their healthcare provider if they think they've been exposed to, or have, RSV.**

What are the symptoms?

- Fever (American Academy of Pediatrics defines fever as a temperature of 100.4°F [38°C] or higher)
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Lack of appetite
- Additional symptoms to look for, particularly in very young infants (under 6 months of age) and premature infants with RSV, are:
 - Low activity level
 - Cranky or fussy
 - Lack of appetite
 - Fast breathing or difficulty breathing (including flaring nostrils, grunting, wheezing)
- Most symptoms go away in 8 to 15 days.

How is it spread?

- The virus is found in the droplets from coughs, sneezes, drool, and runny noses.
 - The virus can spread when a person who has RSV coughs or sneezes and another person breathes in the droplets.
 - It can also spread by:
 - touching an object or surface that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, eyes, or nose.
 - sharing utensils or cups with someone who has RSV.
 - RSV can live on surfaces for many hours.
 - A person can spread RSV for weeks, even after symptoms go away.
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How Do I Know If My Child Has RSV?

- A health care provider can take a swab of the nose or throat to find the virus.
- Blood tests may also be done to identify an RSV infection.

If you have additional questions or believe your child has RSV, contact your healthcare provider. This fact sheet provides general information only.

What If My Child Has RSV?

Notify your child care provider or preschool immediately if your child has RSV.

How is it treated?

- There is not a specific medication for RSV, but you can treat some of the symptoms to make your child more comfortable. Talk with your healthcare provider about treatment options.
- Keep children comfortable, allow them to rest, make sure they drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, and check on them often.
- Infants 3 months or younger with a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher should be seen by their healthcare provider.
- Talk with your child's healthcare provider if you have any concerns about your child's symptoms. **If your child is showing signs of dehydration (fewer wet diapers or less urine than usual, more tired than normal, dizziness, dry tongue or lips, fewer tears), is breathing fast, is having trouble breathing, or has a severe headache, they need to be seen by a healthcare provider immediately.**

How can I help prevent RSV from spreading?

- Stay home when sick.
 - Wash hands often with soap and warm water, especially after sneezing, coughing, or wiping noses.
 - Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Avoid sharing cups, eating utensils, food, and drinks with anyone who has RSV.
 - Thoroughly clean toys and other objects children put into their mouths with soap and water.
 - Clean and disinfect household surfaces.
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Does My Child Need to Stay Home from Child Care?

No. Children who have been exposed to, or have been diagnosed with, RSV can continue to attend child care **unless**:

- They have a fever (temperature of 100.4°F [38°C] or higher) along with other RSV symptoms.
- They do not feel well enough to participate in classroom activities (for example: unusually tired; cranky or fussy; or crying more than normal).

Please follow your child care program's sickness policy.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Caring for our Children, Chapter 3 Health Promotion and Protection, 3.6 Management of Illness, 3.6.1 Inclusion/Exclusion Due to Illness
- Caring for our Children, Chapter 7 Infectious Diseases, 7.3 Respiratory Tract Infections, 7.3.8 Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)
- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 5th Edition. pages 147-148

Centers for Diseases Control & Prevention

- Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection (RSV). <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/>

Child Care Health Program – Public Health Seattle & King County

- <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/child-teen-health/child-care-health/disease-prevention.aspx>