



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Key Facts about RSV

- ➔ Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common respiratory virus that causes cold symptoms in many infants, young children, and older adults.
- ➔ RSV is most active from November to April.
- ➔ Most children will have at least one RSV infection by the age of two.
- ➔ RSV typically causes mild, cold-like symptoms and is the most common cause of bronchiolitis, an inflammation of the small airways in the lung, and pneumonia in young infants and toddlers.
- ➔ The risk of severe outcomes from RSV infection is highest among those over the age of 60, infants under six months of age and children under 24 months of age with chronic conditions such as chronic lung disease, congenital heart disease, compromised immune systems, or neuromuscular disorders.
- ➔ For information on the expanded infant and high-risk child RSV immunization and the high-risk older adult RSV vaccine program, please visit ontario.ca/RSV.

Signs and symptoms of RSV

Individuals with RSV may experience symptoms like a cold or flu, including:

- Coughing
- A runny nose
- Fever
- Wheezing
- A decrease in appetite and energy

How to care for someone with RSV

- Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever and pain. Do not give ibuprofen to babies under six months old without speaking to a health care provider. Never give aspirin to children.
- Offer plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. If your baby is having trouble drinking, try to clear nasal congestion with a bulb syringe or saline nose drops.
- A lukewarm bath or wet face cloth can provide comfort but won't change body temperature. Avoid cold baths as they can cause shivering, raising body temperature. Do not use alcohol baths or rubs to lower a fever.
- Dress in light clothing to help cool down, adding warmer clothing if shivering occurs.
- Consult your health care provider before giving your child non-prescription cold medicines.

When to call a doctor or go to an emergency department

Go to an emergency department if someone with RSV has trouble breathing, pale skin, lips that look white or blue, asthma or wheezing, or has any of the following symptoms:

- Fever and is very sleepy or difficult to wake
- Repeated vomiting and unable to keep any liquids down for eight hours or more
- Vomiting or diarrhea containing a large amount of blood
- Signs of dehydration with dry mouth or no urination for eight hours or more
- Chest pain/palpitations in older adults

Certain health conditions may place you at a higher risk, such as heart or lung disease. Please speak with a healthcare provider for information on when to seek additional treatment.

How to protect yourself and others from RSV

- Stay at home when sick until you have no fever and symptoms and have been improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if there was nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea)
- Wash/sanitize your hands often
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Regularly clean high touch surfaces and shared items
- Improve the ventilation and air quality in your home
- Consider wearing a tight-fitting, well-constructed mask in indoor public settings, especially if you are at higher risk of severe infection
- Avoid smoke from tobacco and cannabis products