

RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV) FACT SHEET

What is RSV?

RSV (a virus) infection is a common respiratory illness that can affect persons of any age. RSV infections generally occur in the United States from November to April. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung) and pneumonia in children under 1 year of age in the United States. Each year, 75,000 to 125,000 children in this age group are hospitalized due to RSV infection. Almost all children are infected with the virus by their second birthday, but only a small percentage develop severe disease. Reinfection is common throughout life.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

Illness usually begins 4 to 6 days after exposure with a runny nose and decrease in appetite. Coughing, sneezing, and fever typically develop 1 to 3 days later. Wheezing may also occur. In very young infants, irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties may be the only symptoms of infection. Most otherwise healthy infants infected with RSV do not require hospitalization. In most cases, including among those who need to be hospitalized, full recovery from illness occurs in about 1 to 2 weeks.

Who is at risk for severe RSV infection?

Premature infants, children less than 2 years of age with congenital heart or chronic lung disease, and children with compromised (weakened) immune systems due to a medical condition or medical treatment are at highest risk for severe disease. Adults with compromised immune systems and those 65 and older are also at increased risk of severe disease.

Should my child stay home from school?

Yes, until the fever is resolved and the child feels better.

How is RSV spread?

RSV can be spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes into the air. Coughing and sneezing send virus-containing droplets into the air, where they can infect a person if they inhale these droplets or these droplets come in contact with their mouth, nose, or eye. Infection can also result from direct and indirect contact with nasal or oral secretions from infected persons.

How can RSV be prevented?

- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wash hands frequently and correctly (with soap and water for 15–20 seconds)
- Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils with others
- Refrain from kissing others if you know you have RSV infection
- Cleaning contaminated surfaces (such as doorknobs) may help stop the spread of RSV

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/cd/>