

# What You Should Know About RSV



## What Is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common virus that can cause a respiratory infection in your nose, throat, sinuses, airways, and lungs. RSV infection is so common that most people will have already gotten it before age 2. But anyone can get RSV at any age, and you can also be infected with the virus more than once.

RSV symptoms usually appear 4 to 6 days after you're infected. Most people will have mild, cold-like symptoms and get better within 2 weeks, and some people may not have any symptoms at all.

When symptoms do happen, they can include:

- Dry cough
- Sneezing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Wheezing
- Sore throat
- Decreased appetite
- Headache
- Fever (for some people)

## RSV Can Be Serious

While RSV may not seem bad at first, it can get worse after a few days and can be serious and even life-threatening. So be sure to call your doctor or get medical attention if someone isn't drinking enough fluids or has trouble breathing, a high fever, or any symptoms that are getting worse.

People at a higher risk for severe illness from RSV include:

- Older adults, especially those over 65
- People who have certain heart or lung conditions or a weakened immune system
- Babies born prematurely
- Babies 12 months old and younger
- Children who have certain health conditions and trouble swallowing

RSV can also make you sick enough to need to be in the hospital and cause other serious complications (additional problems) like the lung infection pneumonia, worsening of certain heart and lung conditions, congestive heart failure (CHF) where your heart can't pump enough blood, and middle ear infections, especially in babies and young children.

If you or someone close to you has been exposed to RSV or has any symptoms -- especially if there's a higher risk for severe illness -- contact your doctor or healthcare team member. To check for RSV, they may do a test for the virus and a physical exam where they check your lungs.

## Protecting Yourself and Others

RSV spreads from person to person through the air when someone who's infected coughs or sneezes. But the virus can also live for hours on objects and surfaces, such as countertops, toys, phones, and doorknobs. This means that RSV can also spread through direct contact by touching the object or surface and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

You're most likely to spread RSV during the first week you're infected. But infants and people who have weakened immune systems can continue to spread it for up to 4 weeks, even after their symptoms go away.

Ways you can protect yourself and others and help prevent RSV from spreading include:

- Wash your hands well and often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze -- or cough/sneeze into your elbow, not your hands, if you don't have a tissue -- and then throw it away afterward
- Clean surfaces and frequently touched objects
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing and sharing cups or eating utensils, with people who are sick
- Stay home if you are sick



## Questions you can ask your doctor or healthcare team member about RSV can include:

- ✓ Am I at a higher risk for severe illness from RSV?
- ✓ Are there any symptoms I should look for?
- ✓ How can I help prevent the spread of RSV and protect myself and others?
- ✓ What should I do if a member of my family or I get sick?
- ✓ Where can I find more information and resources?