

Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection (RSV)



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RSV in Infants and Young Children



RSV can be dangerous for some infants and young children. Each year in the United States, an estimated 58,000-80,000 children younger than 5 years are hospitalized due to RSV infection. Children at greatest risk for severe illness from RSV include the following:

- Premature infants
- Infants up to 12 months, especially those 6 months and younger
- Children younger than 2 years with chronic lung disease or congenital (present from birth) heart disease
- Children with weakened immune systems
- Children who have neuromuscular disorders, including those who have difficulty swallowing or clearing mucus secretions

Preventing Severe RSV in Children

Two monoclonal antibody products – nirsevimab (Beyfortus) and palivizumab (Synagis) – can help protect babies and young children from severe disease from an RSV infection. Monoclonal antibodies are not vaccines. They provide an extra layer of defense that helps fight RSV infections and protect children from getting very sick.

These products are not treatments for a child who already has RSV infection. Talk to your child's healthcare provider to determine if one of these monoclonal antibody products might be right for your child.

Scientists are gathering and reviewing data on a vaccine intended to be given to pregnant people to protect infants in their first RSV season. Data being reviewed focus on the safety and efficacy of the use of this vaccine in pregnant people to protect their infants.

Severe RSV Infection

Virtually all children get an RSV infection by the time they are 2 years old. Most of the time RSV will cause a mild, cold-like illness, but it can also cause severe illness such as

- Bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung)
- Pneumonia (infection of the lungs)

Two to three out of every 100 infants with RSV infection may need to be hospitalized. Those who are hospitalized may require oxygen, IV fluids (if they aren't eating and drinking), and mechanical ventilation (a machine to help with breathing). Most improve with this type of supportive care and are discharged in a few days.

Early Symptoms of RSV

RSV may not be severe when it first starts. However, it can become more severe a few days into the illness. Early symptoms of RSV may include:

- Runny nose
- Eating or drinking less
- Cough, which may progress to wheezing or difficulty breathing



RSV in Very Young Infants

Infants who get an RSV infection almost always show symptoms. This is different from adults, who can sometimes get RSV infections and not have symptoms. In very young infants (less than 6 months old), the symptoms of RSV infection may include:

- Irritability
- Decreased activity
- Eating or drinking less
- Apnea (pauses in breathing for more than 10 seconds)

Fever may not always occur with RSV infections.

What to Do If Your Child Is at High Risk for Severe RSV Disease

Talk to your child's healthcare provider to determine if a monoclonal antibody product might be right for your child. RSV season typically starts in the fall and peaks in the winter in most regions of the United States. If you have contact with an infant or young child, especially those who were born prematurely, have chronic lung or heart disease or a weakened immune system, you should take extra care to keep the infant healthy by doing the following:



- **Wash your hands often**
Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and help young children do the same. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Washing your hands will help protect you from germs.
- **Keep your hands off your face**
Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Germs spread this way.
- **Avoid close contact with sick people**
Avoid close contact, such as kissing, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who have cold-like symptoms.
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes**
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash afterward.
- **Clean and disinfect surfaces**
Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that people frequently touch, such as toys, doorknobs, and mobile devices. When people infected with RSV touch surfaces and objects, they can leave behind germs. Also, when they cough or sneeze, droplets containing germs can land on surfaces and objects.
- **Stay home when you are sick**
If possible, stay home from work, school, and public areas when you are sick. This will help protect others from catching your illness.

Call your healthcare provider if you or your child is having difficulty breathing, not drinking enough fluids, or experiencing worsening symptoms.



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