

# RSV

## When should I worry about RSV?

### **Common Facts about RSV:**

1. Almost all children get RSV at least once before they are 2 years old
2. For most healthy children, RSV is like a cold but some children can get very sick with RSV
3. RSV stands for Respiratory Syncytial Virus and is one of many viruses that cause respiratory illness (nose, throat, and lung)
4. This virus generally occurs in late fall to early Spring but can vary in different parts of the country. This year in particular, RSV and other respiratory illnesses has started earlier than usual this year.

### **When is RSV more than just a cold?**

- Typically, RSV causes a cold, but it may be followed by bronchiolitis or pneumonia.
- The worst symptoms generally last an average of 5-7 days, but children can cough for 2-3 weeks.

### **How do I differentiate RSV cold from bronchiolitis?**

#### **Cold/Upper Respiratory Tract Infection Symptoms:**

Fever (temp of 100.4F or more), cough (dry or wet sounding), congestion, runny nose, sneezing, fussiness or poor feeding.

#### **RSV Bronchiolitis:**

Cold symptoms plus: wheezing, fast breathing, chest caving in with breaths, flaring of the nostrils, head bobbing with breathing or grunting.

#### **How can I tell if my child has severe RSV bronchiolitis?**

1. First, assess how hard your baby is breathing.
2. Chest wall retractions is a sign that your baby is working harder than normal to breathe
3. Chest wall retractions happen when a baby must use muscles between the ribs or in the neck to breathe. The higher up the muscles the baby has to use, the more severe the retractions
4. If you see your child's rib cage "caving in" and forming an upside down "V" under the neck, then they are working too hard.
5. RSV symptoms are typically at their worst, days 3 to 5.

### **Which children are at greater risk for severe RSV bronchiolitis?**

1. 3 months or younger at the start of RSV season
2. Premature or low birth weight (especially those born before 29 weeks)
3. Chronic lung disease of prematurity
4. Babies with certain type of heart defects
5. Babies with weak immune systems due to illness or treatment
6. Exposure to mother's smoking in pregnancy or second-hand smoke
7. Crowded living conditions or daycares
8. Allergies and Eczema
9. Not Breast-feeding

### **When should I call my pediatrician?**

Call your pediatrician right away if your child has any:

1. Chest wall or neck retractions, nasal flaring, or head bobbing

2. Grunting
3. Signs of dehydration (less than 1 wet diaper every 8 hours)
4. Gray or blue color to tongue, lips, or skin
5. Significantly decreased activity or alertness

### **How is RSV diagnosed?**

- Through a physical exam or nasal swab test, but these tests are usually not necessary since most children recover on their own and there is no treatment for RSV

### **How is RSV spread?**

It spreads just like the common cold virus:

- Direct person to person contact with saliva, mucus, or nasal discharge
- Unclean hands (RSV can survive 30 minutes or more on unwashed hands)
- Unclean objects or surfaces (RSV can survive up to 6 hours on keyboards, doorknobs, and toys)
- Symptoms usually appear 2 to 8 days after contact with RSV
- Please keep in mind children and adults can get RSV multiple times but repeat infections are usually less severe than the initial one.

### **How do I get my child to feel more comfortable?**

- Nasal saline with gentle suctioning
- Cool mist humidifier
- Fluids and frequent feedings: Try suctioning your baby's nose before a feeding
- Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen (>6 months of age) for fevers

- Avoid cough and cold medications

**How can you protect your children from RSV?**

- Wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds