

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

What is RSV?

RSV stands for Respiratory Syncytial Virus. It is a common cause of respiratory illness in young children and adults.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

RSV can present with nasal congestion, runny nose, cough, fever, headache, and poor appetite. The respiratory symptoms may progress to bronchiolitis.

What is bronchiolitis?

Bronchiolitis is a blockage of the small airways of the lungs. With bronchiolitis, symptoms can become more severe and include an increased work of breathing, grunting, wheezing, and other breathing problems. Infants younger than 1 year old and those born prematurely are at higher risk for bronchiolitis.

Is RSV contagious?

Yes, RSV is highly contagious and is spread by droplets from coughing and sneezing. It can also be spread by touching something that is contaminated (clothing, doorknobs, etc). RSV is often seasonal and is most commonly seen from late fall through early spring.

The best prevention is frequent hand-washing and covering coughs and sneezes.

How is RSV treated?

Most cases of RSV are mild and do not need medical treatment. Antibiotics do not work because RSV is a viral illness. Home care includes: rest, hydration (small, frequent volumes), fever control, nasal clearance, and comfort. RSV can be more serious in younger children and may require hospitalization for management of breathing problems and hydration.

When should I see a doctor?

- If the fever persists or is getting higher
- Any signs of respiratory distress: worsening cough, wheezing, working hard to breath, difficulty catching a breath
 - Any signs of dehydration or refusing to eat/drink