

# FACT SHEET

# Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

## What is RSV?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung) and pneumonia (infection of the lungs) in children younger than one year of age in the United States. It is also a significant cause of respiratory illness in older adults.

## How is RSV spread?

RSV is spread through direct and indirect contact with respiratory secretions of infected individuals. The virus can spread when an infected person sneezes or coughs and you inhale the droplets or get them in your eyes. You can also get RSV by touching a surface with the virus on it and then touching your face. RSV can live for many hours on hard surfaces like tables or crib rails. People with RSV are typically contagious for 3-8 days.

## What are the symptoms of RSV?

- Runny nose
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Coughing and sneezing
- Wheezing

## How can RSV be prevented?

The best way to prevent RSV is frequent handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve - *not* your hands. Do not share drinks or utensils and avoid close contact like kissing and shaking hands. Clean frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs and mobile devices.

## How is RSV treated?

Most RSV infections go away on their own in a week or two. Treatment is generally focused on relieving symptoms, like managing fever and pain with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers. For more serious illness, some people with RSV need to be hospitalized if they are having trouble breathing or are dehydrated.

*This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*