



RSV- Respiratory Syncytial Virus

What is RSV?

RSV or respiratory syncytial virus causes infections of the upper respiratory tract (like a cold) and the lower respiratory tract (like pneumonia). It is the most frequent cause of lower respiratory infections in infants and children under 2 years of age. RSV infection can range from very mild to life threatening or even fatal, especially for children with heart disease or very weak immune systems. It is highly contagious.

How is RSV spread?

RSV is spread through direct contact (touching, kissing) with infectious body secretions and through the air (sneezing, coughing).

What are signs and symptoms of RSV?

In children older than age 3 and adults, RSV usually causes mild, “cold-like” symptoms, including coughing, fever, runny nose and sore throat. In children younger than age 3, RSV may lead to pneumonia or bronchiolitis (inflammation of the mucous membrane of the bronchial tubes). Symptoms of these problems include rapid or difficulty breathing, wheezing, severe cough and high fever. It is important to note that infants, especially those born prematurely, may only show symptoms such as poor feeding, irritability and sleepiness. Your health care provider should be contacted immediately if you or your child show any of these symptoms so that proper diagnosis and treatment can take place.

How is RSV treated?

There is no treatment for RSV. For children with a mild case of RSV, your health care provider may recommend medications to treat symptoms, such as acetaminophen to reduce fever and lots of fluids. Most children recover from RSV in eight to 15 days. A child with a more severe case may be admitted to the hospital for oxygen therapy and or to use a respirator.

How is RSV controlled?

In the event a confirmed outbreak, a variety of control measures can be used:

- Screening of persons for RSV
- Separating infected individuals from healthy ones

Children who are hospitalized due to RSV should be isolated and have restricted visitation.

Can RSV be prevented?

In an effort to reduce the spread of RSV, parents, caregivers and others should practice good hygiene. Careful, thorough and consistent handwashing is important, especially after wiping a nose or after contact with other respiratory discharge from sneezing or coughing. The virus can live on surfaces like tables, faucets and toys for many hours, so it is important to clean these items thoroughly with a bleach and water mixture. Also, do not share utensils, cups and glasses. Limit your infant’s exposure to people who have a cold or fever.

For more information call the Guilford County Department of Public Health at 336-641-7777 or visit www.myguilford.com