



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Key Facts about RSV

- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a major cause of lower respiratory illness affecting the lungs and airways, particularly among infants, young children and older adults.
- RSV may cause cold-like symptoms and is the most common cause of bronchiolitis, a common chest infection that affects infants and toddlers.
- Most people who get an RSV infection will have mild illness and will recover within a week or two without the need for medical attention or treatment.
- For some individuals, RSV may result in severe infections, particularly among infants, young children and older adults. RSV can also make chronic health problems worse.
- Individuals are most likely to catch RSV from late fall to early spring when the virus is most active.

RSV typically causes mild symptoms that last a few days and would not require medical attention. **Go to an emergency department if someone:**

- Has trouble breathing, pale skin, lips that look white or blue, asthma or wheezing.
- Has any of the following symptoms:
 - fever and is very sleepy or difficult to wake
 - repeated vomiting and unable to keep any liquids down for eight hours or more
 - vomiting or diarrhea containing a large amount of blood
 - signs of dehydration with dry mouth or no urination for eight hours or more

What are the signs and symptoms of RSV?

Symptoms of RSV are similar to those of the cold or flu, including:

- coughing
- a runny nose
- fever
- wheezing
- a decrease in appetite and energy
- irritability in children

Because these are common symptoms, it is easy to mistake RSV for other respiratory illnesses, such as the flu or COVID-19. While most RSV symptoms will go away in a few days, seek medical attention if you or your child have trouble breathing, are not drinking enough fluids or are experiencing worsening symptoms.

How to treat someone with RSV

- Use over-the-counter acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever and pain. Do not give ibuprofen to babies under six months old without first speaking to a health care provider. Never give aspirin to children.
- Drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration (loss of body fluids). If your baby is having trouble drinking, try to clear nasal congestion with a bulb syringe or with saline (salt water) nose drops.
- A lukewarm bath or wet face cloths will not change someone's body temperature but may help them feel more comfortable. Avoid cold baths because they can make the person shiver, raising their temperature. Do not try to use rubbing alcohol to lower a fever.
- Dress in light clothing to allow the body to cool down and help increase comfort. If the person starts to shiver, add warmer clothing. Remove them when the shivering stops.

Talk to a health care provider

- Before combining natural or herbal supplements with medicine, as some of ingredients may interact.
- Some medicines, like over-the-counter cough and cold medicines, contain ingredients that are not good for children.

How to protect yourself and others from RSV?

You can prevent the spread of RSV and other respiratory viruses by:

- staying home if you or someone you're caring for is sick until you/they have no fever and symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if there was nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea)
- washing your hands often
- covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- regularly cleaning high touch surfaces
- optimizing indoor air quality
- consider wearing a tight-fitting, well-constructed mask in indoor public settings, especially if you are at higher risk of severe infection
- breastfeeding your baby, if possible. Breast milk contains antibodies and other immune factors that help prevent and fight off illness
- avoiding cigarette smoke

Is there an RSV vaccine available?

- Ontario is introducing the first publicly funded RSV vaccine program for older high-risk adults. Through this program, the Ministry of Health covers the full cost of the vaccine for adults aged 60 years and older living in long-term care homes, Elder Care Lodges, and some retirement home residents.
- There is currently no vaccine authorized for use for infants. However, the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Prophylaxis for High-Risk Infants Program will be available for the upcoming 2023/24 season. The injection is only provided during the active season to infants who meet the ministry's eligibility criteria for funding.

Where can I get more information?

- [Ontario.ca/RSV](https://ontario.ca/RSV)
- Health811 online or call 811 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007 toll free) for health advice and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week