



# RSV

## (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)

### What is RSV?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a common virus that causes respiratory infections, much like a cold. It spreads through contact with infected saliva, mucus, or nasal discharge, entering the body via the nose or eyes. RSV infections are most common from late fall to early spring.

For many children, RSV causes mild symptoms. However, it is the leading cause of hospitalization in children under 1 year old. This is most often the case when it causes bronchiolitis, a lower respiratory tract illness characterized by wheezing, coughing, and trouble breathing.

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### New Ways to Protect Babies from RSV

- **Maternal RSV Vaccine:** Pregnant people can receive the vaccine (Abrysvo) between 32 and 36 weeks if the baby will be born during RSV season. This one-time vaccine reduces the risk of RSV hospitalization by 57% in the baby's first six months.
  - **RSV Immunization for Babies:** Nirsevimab (Beyfortus), a preventive antibody injection, can be given at birth or during a newborn visit. It offers 80–90% protection against severe RSV during the season. Because it is an antibody, not a vaccine, it offers protection immediately.
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### How to Help Your Child Feel Better

There is no specific cure for RSV, but these tips can ease discomfort:

- Use saline drops and suction frequently to clear nasal passages
  - Run a cool-mist humidifier to break up mucus.
  - Ensure hydration with frequent feedings. Suction your baby's nose before feeding to help them breathe easier.
  - Offer acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever (if over 6 months old), if uncomfortable. Avoid aspirin and cold medicines.
  - In some infants with history of wheezing/asthma, Albuterol, a prescription bronchodilator given via nebulizer, may be helpful.
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### Symptoms of RSV

Most RSV cases cause cold-like symptoms, and this can be very mild and look no different than every other mild cold. However, we worry more about RSV in infants because they have the highest risk of RSV causing bronchiolitis, though an infant can have RSV and have no symptoms of bronchiolitis (wheezing, rapid breathing, retractions). RSV symptoms peak around days 3–5 and last 7–14 days. The symptom we most commonly notice that makes us suspect RSV is a persistently runny nose, often described as “running like a faucet.” Often, thick nasal congestion and a “wet sounding cough” are also present.

**“Common cold” vs bronchiolitis – both of which could be caused by RSV**

| Cold: Upper Respiratory Tract Infection  | Bronchiolitis: Lower Respiratory Tract Infection  |
|--|---|
| <p>Cold symptoms may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever (temperature of 100.4 or higher)</li> <li>• Cough (dry or wet sounding)</li> <li>• Congestion</li> <li>• Runny nose</li> <li>• Sneezing</li> <li>• Fussiness</li> <li>• Poor <b>feeding</b></li> <li>• Hoarse cry or voice</li> </ul> | <p>May include <b>cold symptoms, plus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast breathing</li> <li>• Flaring of the nostrils &amp; head bobbing with breathing</li> <li>• Rhythmic grunting during breathing</li> <li>• Belly breathing, tugging between the ribs and/or the lower neck (<i>see video, below</i>)</li> <li>• Wheezing</li> </ul> |

From: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/RSV-When-Its-More-Than-Just-a-Cold.aspx>

**Call us if your child has:**

- Difficulty breathing or pauses in breathing (see video: [Signs of RSV in babies, AAP](#) )
- Dehydration (fewer than one wet diaper every 8 hours).
- Pale, gray, or blue skin, lips, or nails.
- Symptoms that worsen or do not improve after 7 days.
- Ear pain, drainage, or worsening fussiness.



**Preventing RSV**

- **Vaccines:** Keep your family up to date on vaccines, including flu and COVID-19 shots. Adults over 60 can also get the RSV vaccine.
- **Limit Exposure:** Avoid crowded places and keep sick individuals away from your baby.
- **Hygiene:** Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds and disinfect surfaces regularly.
- **Breastfeeding:** Breastmilk contains antibodies that help prevent and fight infections.

**Key Takeaway**

While RSV is often mild, it can cause severe illness in infants and young children. New immunizations offer protection, and simple at-home care can ease symptoms. Stay alert for any warning signs, and don’t hesitate to reach out if you need assistance. We’re grateful for the chance to support you and your child and provide peace of mind.