

RSV (Syncytial Virus)

RSV is a very common viral infection and most children have had it by the time they are two. For most babies and young children, the infection causes nothing more than a cold. But for a small percentage, infection with the RSV virus can lead to problems such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia.

RSV is spread through tiny droplets of liquid from the coughs or sneezes of someone who's infected or by touching objects that have come in contact or been used by an infected person. The virus enters the body through the nose and mouth.

The incubation period-the time from exposure to RSV until you have symptoms-ranges from **2 to 8 days**. You are most likely to spread the virus within the first several days after symptoms of RSV infection begin. You remain contagious for up to 8 days.

Symptoms may include:

- Cold-like symptoms of RSV infection includes cough and runny nose, usually last 1 to 2 weeks.
- High fever
- Thick discharge from the nose
- Cough producing yellow or green mucus
- Unusual irritability or inactivity
- Refusal to breastfeed or bottle-feed/eat
- Signs of dehydration, including lack of tears when crying, little or no urine in the nappy for 6 hours, cool dry skin.

Treatment:

Fortunately, most cases of RSV are mild and require no specific treatment from doctors. Antibiotics aren't used because RSV is a virus and antibiotics are only effective against bacteria.

- Give your child plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration
- Ensure they have plenty of rest
- Give fever reducing medication to ease the symptoms
- If your child is uncomfortable and too young to blow his or her own nose, use a nasal aspirator (or bulb syringe) to remove sticky nasal fluids

Call the doctor if your child has any of these symptoms:

- High fever that does not reduce with medication
- Thick nasal discharge that does not clear after 1 week or it affects breathing
- Worsening cough or cough that produces yellow or green mucus
- Signs of dehydration
- Difficulty breathing

Prevention:

Good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette is the most important and effective way of preventing spread of the infection. For further information and advice please contact the Nursing Team.