



Help protect your baby against RSV

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and your baby

At this fragile stage in your baby's life, knowledge is power. That's why we've created this brochure, to help you better understand how to help protect your baby from this very common and easy to catch virus called RSV. This brochure provides tips and advice on keeping your baby healthy during active RSV season and informs you on what to do if your baby catches RSV.

RSV is a virus that affects the lungs. RSV may cause respiratory illness in babies and young children. Premature babies (preemies) are especially vulnerable.

Is your baby at risk of an RSV infection? Talk to your healthcare professional about ways you can help reduce the risk of RSV infection, including medical options.

Visit  [RSVshield.ca](https://www.rsvshield.ca) to learn more

What is Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)?

RSV stands for **R**espiratory **S**yncytial **V**irus. It is a very common virus. Almost all children get RSV at least once before they are 2 years old.



In most babies and young children, **RSV usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms**. Most do not experience serious RSV infections. However, in **babies with certain risk factors, it can cause serious lung infections that need to be treated at the hospital**.

A **virus** is a very tiny, nonliving agent capable of infecting living cells and causing various diseases in humans, animals and plants.

What are the symptoms of an RSV infection?

Symptoms may include:

- Congestion or runny nose
- Dry cough
- Low-grade fever (37.5°C to 38°C or 99.6°F to 100.3°F)
- Sore throat
- Sneezing
- Headache

What are the symptoms of a severe RSV infection?

Severe infection symptoms may include:

- Fever (38°C or 100.4°F or higher)
- Severe cough
- Wheezing (a whistling sound caused by difficulty breathing)
- Short, shallow and fast breathing
- Difficulty breathing
- Blue colour of the skin
- Decrease in appetite
- Unusual tiredness
- Fussiness

If your baby is showing more serious symptoms, or is considered to be at **high risk for serious complications from an RSV infection**, talk to your healthcare professional. Medical options exist that can help protect your baby from RSV.



Is your baby at risk of a serious RSV infection?

Conditions that may cause a higher risk for serious RSV infection are:



Babies born prematurely

Babies born less than 36 weeks



less than 6 months old at the start of RSV season

Babies and young children with chronic (long-term) lung problems

Babies and young children being treated for lung disease in the past 6 months



less than 24 months old at the start of RSV season



Babies and young children with congenital (inherited) heart problems

Babies and young children who are less than 24 months old at the start of RSV season



When is RSV season?

RSV infection can happen at any time of the year. In Canada, the active season for RSV usually begins in November or December and lasts for four to five months. **Ask your healthcare professional about when it occurs in your area.**

Public health measures to reduce COVID-19 circulation resulted in declining rates of RSV infection across the globe. It is unknown what impact these measures will have on the spread of RSV. It is important to be prepared and to stay alert when it comes to RSV.



How is RSV spread? Is it easy to catch?

RSV is spread easily through sneezing, coughing or by touching something that has been in contact with the virus. It is a very common virus; almost all children get RSV at least once before they are 2 years old.



Person-to-person contact

- RSV can be spread through people touching, such as kissing or sharing cups and kitchen utensils.

Unwashed hands

- RSV can survive 30 minutes or more on unwashed hands.



Objects or surfaces

- RSV can survive up to 6 hours on surfaces such as toys, countertops, crib rails and doorknobs.

Symptoms can appear 2 to 8 days after contact with RSV and people infected with RSV are usually **contagious** for 3 to 8 days. However, some babies and people with weakened immune systems can be contagious for as long as 4 weeks – even if they are not showing symptoms.

Contagious describes the spread of an illness that can be caught by touching people or things that are infected.

How can you help protect your baby during RSV season?

There are simple ways of reducing the risk of RSV infection:

- Wash your hands often and ask others to do the same
- Avoid crowds and other young children, especially those with a cold or fever
- Keep toys, clothes, blankets and sheets clean
- Do not let anyone smoke in your home or near your baby



Discussion guide

Here are a few questions to help you start a conversation with your healthcare professional:

Is my baby at risk of serious RSV infection?

What are the symptoms of a serious RSV infection?

How can I help protect my baby from an RSV infection?

When is RSV season?

What can I do if my baby catches RSV?

Visit



RSVshield.ca

**for more information
on how to protect your
baby from RSV**

What can I do if I suspect my baby has RSV?

There is no cure or vaccine for RSV. If your baby is experiencing symptoms of RSV, there are some steps you can take to make him/her feel more comfortable. Offer him/her plenty of fluids and talk to your healthcare team about the use of over-the-counter medications (such as acetaminophen) to help reduce fever and/or pain. The use of nasal saline drops and suctioning may help clear a stuffy nose.



Watch for signs of dehydration such as dry mouth, peeing less than usual (consistent dry diapers), sunken eyes and extreme fussiness or sleepiness. **If severe symptoms occur, hospital care may be required. Consult your healthcare professional to determine what steps you should take.**

RSV is a virus – medications, such as **antibiotics**, cannot be used to treat RSV. **Antibiotics** may be used if there's a bacterial complication, such as bacterial pneumonia.

Antibiotics are a medication that is used to treat bacterial infections.

Resources

Additional links and resources:

Canadian Premature Babies Foundation (CPBF)cpbf-fbpc.org/home

Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS)cps.ca

Préma-Québecpremaquebec.ca/en

Talk to your healthcare professional
to find out more about RSV.

Visit  RSVshield.ca to learn more