

Maruthi Pediatrics

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RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common virus that usually affects the nose, throat, and lungs. Most RSV infections are not serious in older children and adults, but babies and young children may be at risk for severe disease.

RSV infections in the US are most common from November to April.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Cough and runny nose
- Ear pain or drainage of fluid from the ear
- Eye redness and irritation
- Sore throat
- Fever
- Fast breathing, trouble breathing, or wheezing

RSV infection can also cause lung infections.

Some babies and small children may have so much trouble breathing that they don't eat well.

How is it diagnosed?

Your child's healthcare provider will ask about your child's symptoms and medical history and examine your child. Samples of mucus from your child's nose may be tested for the virus.

How is it treated?

Because RSV is caused by a virus and not bacteria, antibiotics will not help treat RSV.

Some babies may need extra oxygen and treatment at the hospital. If your child is vomiting and unable to eat or drink, he may need IV fluids.

RSV illness usually lasts 7 to 21 days.

How can I take care of my child?

Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider. In addition:

- Use a bulb syringe to help suck out mucus from your child's nose. This will help your child breathe more easily. A bulb syringe is a small rubber suction tool that you can buy in the baby section of most drug stores or grocery stores. Follow the directions on the package. Your healthcare provider can also show you how this is done.
- Use a humidifier to put more moisture in the air. Avoid steam vaporizers because they can cause burns. Be sure to keep the humidifier clean, as recommended in the manufacturer's instructions. It's important to keep bacteria and mold from growing in the water container.
- Give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever and pain relief. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin, may cause stomach bleeding and other problems. Read the label and give as directed. Check with your healthcare provider before you give any medicine that contains aspirin or salicylates to a child or teen. This includes medicines like baby aspirin, some cold medicines, and Pepto-Bismol. Children and teens who take aspirin are at risk for a serious illness called Reye's syndrome. Acetaminophen may cause liver damage or other problems. Read the label carefully and give your child the correct dose as directed. Do not give more doses than directed. To make sure you don't give your child too much, check other medicines your child takes to see if they also contain acetaminophen. Unless recommended by your healthcare provider, your child should not take this medicine for more than 5 days.
- Do not give cough medicines to children under the age of 4. If your child is between the ages of 4 and 6, ask your healthcare provider before giving cough medicine. For children over the age of 6, you can give cough medicines, but they have not been proven to be helpful. Honey has been shown to help coughs but should not be given to children under 1 year because of the risk of botulism.
- Keep your child away from smoke. Secondhand smoke from cigarettes, cigars, or pipes is very harmful to children.

Ask your provider:

- How long it will take your child to recover
- If there are activities your child should avoid and when your child can return to normal activities
- How to take care of your child at home

- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if your child has them

Make sure you know when your child should come back for a checkup. Keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

How can I help prevent RSV?

RSV is such a common virus that it's almost impossible to keep your child from being exposed to it. One thing you can do is make sure that people wash their hands before holding your child. Also, try to keep your baby away from people with cold symptoms.

There is no vaccine that can prevent RSV. However, babies born very prematurely or babies with certain types of heart or lung diseases may be given a shot every month during the winter and spring. The shot contains antibodies that fight RSV. Antibodies are the proteins your immune system usually makes to fight infections, such as the flu and measles. The immune system is your body's defense against infection. The antibodies can help prevent a more severe infection.