



Fact Sheet: RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)

What is RSV?

RSV is caused by a virus called respiratory syncytial virus. RSV most commonly occurs between the months of December and March and is the most frequent cause of winter colds in children under the age of three. Almost 100% of children in childcare get RSV in the first year of life, usually during outbreaks of the disease during the winter months.

What are the symptoms?

- Cough
- Runny nose
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Body aches
- Feeling tired

How is it spread?

RSV can be spread through the air, when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or by touching a surface on which an infected person has coughed or sneezed. An infected person may be contagious for 7 to 10 days after the start of their illness.

What are the serious complications from RSV?

RSV in older children and adults is usually very mild. Some children under the age of three may develop more serious infections from RSV such as pneumonia, bronchitis, or an ear infection. Premature infants and children with heart or lung disease or weak immune systems have a greater risk of developing complications.

How is it treated?

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- If needed, use a non-aspirin product (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) to reduce fever and discomfort. **Aspirin should not be used in children with viral illnesses since it has been associated with the development of Reye Syndrome.**
- Call your doctor if the cold symptoms appear to interfere with your child's ability to sleep or drink, or if your child is having difficult or rapid breathing.
- If the doctor prescribes medicine for your child, give all the medicine as directed.

How is it prevented?

- Use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes and throw them away in a trashcan.
- Wash hands often using soap and water.
- If your child is at high risk, please check with your physician to see if they qualify for the RSV vaccine.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or 257-3612.

Visit our website at: www.gchd.us or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov

Genesee County Health Department

630 S. Saginaw Street
Flint, Michigan 48502-1540

"Better Life through Better Health"