



RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common virus that usually affects the nose, throat, and lungs. Most serious infections with RSV occur in babies and young children.

What are the symptoms?

Severe cases of infection with RSV can cause a condition known as bronchiolitis, where the small airways of the lungs are infected. Symptoms of bronchiolitis include:

- Cough
- Fever
- Wheezing
- Difficult or rapid breathing.

Some babies and small children may have so much trouble breathing that they don't eat well. Severe RSV infection can also cause pneumonia.

In less severe cases or in older children, RSV can cause:

- Common cold symptoms (cough and runny nose)
- Ear infections
- Eye redness and irritation (conjunctivitis)
- Croup (cough and sore, scratchy throat).

How is it diagnosed?

RSV generally occurs in the winter and spring, so most health care providers diagnose the condition when a child has symptoms during RSV season.

Diagnosis can also be made by using a test to find the virus in samples of mucus from the nose. X-rays do not usually help diagnose RSV infection.

How is it treated?

Suctioning: Use a bulb syringe to help suck out the mucus from your child's nose. This will help your child breathe more easily. When young children are more severely infected, they may need oxygen and suctioning of airways below the nose and throat, which usually requires them to be in the hospital.

Medicine: Because RSV is caused by a virus and not a bacteria, antibiotics will not help treat RSV unless another infection is present. Sometimes, inhaled or oral asthma-type medicine may help your child breathe easier.

How long will it last?

RSV illness usually lasts anywhere from 7 to 21 days.

How can I help prevent RSV?

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

Babies born very prematurely, or babies with chronic lung disease may be able to get treated with a drug called Synagis. Synagis is a kind of antibody to prevent RSV. It is given as a shot every month during the winter and spring.

When should I call Idaho Falls Pediatrics?

Call immediately if:

- Your child has very rapid breathing (more than 60 breaths in a minute) or difficulty breathing.
- Your child has had no wet diapers for more than 8 hours.
- Your child is extremely tired or hard to wake up.
- You cannot console your child

*NOTE: This information is provided as a public educational service. The information does not replace any of the instructions your physician gives you. If you have a medical emergency please call 911 or call the Hospital at (208) 529-6111. If you have questions about your child's care, please call Idaho Falls Pediatrics at (208) 522-4600.