



Infection Prevention Control (IPC) Topic: Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Intro: Respiratory Syncytial Virus or RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Many people recover in a week or more, but RSV can be serious. Infants and older adults are more likely to develop severe RSV and need hospitalization.¹

What is the risk?² Bacteria and viruses live in the nose, mouth, airway, and throat. When an infected person talks, breathes, sneezes, or coughs, they produce respiratory droplets that could spread germs. When people touch their faces, respiratory germs on their hands can end up in their eyes, nose, or mouth and cause an infection.

Highlights:

People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within 4 to 6 days after getting infected. Symptoms of RSV infection usually include³

- Runny nose
- Decrease in appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing

“Healthy adults and infants infected with RSV do not usually need to be hospitalized. But some people with RSV infection, especially older adults, and infants younger than 6 months of age, may need to be hospitalized if they are having trouble breathing or are dehydrated.

In the most severe cases, a person may require additional oxygen, or IV fluids (if they can’t eat or drink enough), or intubation (have a breathing tube inserted through the mouth and down to the airway) with mechanical ventilation (a machine to help a person breathe). In most of these cases, hospitalization only lasts a few days. RSV can also cause more severe infections such as bronchiolitis, an inflammation of the small airways in the lung, and pneumonia, an infection of the lungs. It is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children younger than 1 year of age.³”

How RSV can spread:⁴

- An infected person coughs or sneezes.
- You get virus droplets from a cough or sneeze in your eyes, nose, or mouth.

- You have direct contact with the virus, like kissing the face of a child with RSV.
- You touch a surface that has the virus on it, like a doorknob, and then touch your face before cleaning your hands.

RSV can survive for many hours on hard surfaces such as tables and crib rails. It typically lives on soft surfaces such as tissues and hands for shorter amounts of time.

You can take everyday prevention measures to help reduce the spread of RSV and other respiratory illnesses.

- Stay home when sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with others, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.

Other prevention actions HCW can take when working in hospitals or LTC facilities:⁶

- Placement of the resident in a single-person room
 - If patient/resident must leave their room, they should practice physical distancing and wear a facemask for source control.
- Use of a facemask for source control
- Physical distancing
- Continue active surveillance to identify others with respiratory viral illness (e.g., daily or every shift review of symptoms among residents and HCP) and manage people who were exposed or infected (e.g., use of source control, work restriction for HCP, use of Transmission-based Precautions).
- Consider modifying visitation policy.
 - Visitors should be counseled on risk of potential respiratory infection within the facility.
 - If indoor visitation occurs, visits should ideally occur in the resident's room, and visitors should not linger in other areas of the facility or engage with other residents.

RSV Vaccine:⁵

CDC recommends adults 60 years of age and older have the option to receive a single dose of RSV vaccine, discuss best practice with health care provider.

There are two options for protection of infants against RSV: maternal vaccine for the pregnant person and preventive antibodies given to the baby. Only one of these options is needed for most babies to be protected. CDC recommends a single dose of RSV vaccine for pregnant people from week 32 through week 36 of pregnancy for the prevention of RSV disease in infants

under 6 months of age. This vaccine is recommended to be given from September through January for most of the United States.

RSV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Summary: In conclusion, respiratory syncytial virus can be prevented by cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, cleaning hands, talking with your health care provider about vaccinations, and staying home when sick.

For more information on recognizing risk for surgical site infections and related Project Firstline materials, see references below:

1. [RSV \(Respiratory Syncytial Virus\) | CDC](#)
2. [Germs can live in the respiratory system \(cdc.gov\)](#)
3. [Symptoms and Care of RSV \(Respiratory Syncytial Virus\) | CDC](#)
4. [Transmission of RSV \(Respiratory Syncytial Virus\) | CDC](#)
5. [RSV Vaccine Information Statement | CDC](#)
6. [Viral Respiratory Pathogens Toolkit for Nursing Homes \(cdc.gov\)](#)