



Durham Region Health Department Facts about...



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

What is it?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) can cause disease in the lungs and airways (nose and throat) especially in babies, young children, and older adults. It may cause cold-like symptoms and is the most common cause of chest infections that affect babies and toddlers. Most children will have at least one RSV infection by the age of 2. The infection is most severe in young babies and older adults and can cause serious lung infections that may require hospitalization.

In Canada, approximately 2% of all babies are hospitalized with RSV in their first year of life. In some communities, 5% to 17% of all newborn babies have to go to the hospital because of RSV.

What are common symptoms of RSV?

- Coughing
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing
- Low appetite and energy
- Irritability and difficulty breathing in children

How is it spread?

- RSV spreads mostly through coughing and sneezing. It can also be spread by touching a surface that has the RSV virus and then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose.
- After exposure to the virus, it can take 2 to 8 days before becoming sick. Children can be exposed to and infected with RSV outside the home, such as in school or childcare centres, and can then pass it to other members of the family.

How to protect yourself and others from RSV

- Clean your hands often using soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue (and throw out) or your upper sleeve.
- Keep common surfaces and items clean and disinfected.
- Stay home if you are sick.

... over

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



- Certain people may be eligible for a single dose of an RSV product. Discuss this option with your health care provider:
 - Infants born April 1 and later **and** less than 8 months of age
 - Children up to 24 months who meet high risk criteria
 - Pregnant individuals at 32 to 36 weeks gestation who will deliver during the RSV season
 - Individuals 75 years of age and older
 - Individuals 60 to 74 years of age who meet high-risk criteria
- See [Facts About...Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Vaccines](#).

How is it treated?

- Most RSV infections get better on their own within one to two weeks.
- Symptoms may be managed at home:
 - Over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Ask your doctor about giving ibuprofen to babies under 6 months old and **do not** give aspirin to children.
 - Drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration.
 - Speak to your health care provider before giving your child non-prescription cold medicines.
- RSV can cause severe illness in some individuals. Call a health care professional if you or your child is having difficulty waking, breathing or has signs of dehydration, is not drinking enough fluids, or is experiencing any worsening symptoms.

September 10, 2025

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

