

[](http://www.aap.org/en-us/)

**Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)**

**What is RSV?**

* The major cause of infections of the breathing passages and lungs in infants and children
* Leading cause of bronchiolitis (infection of the small breathing tubes of the lungs)
  + Main cause of hospitalizations for bronchiolitis

**How is it transmitted?**

* From infected secretions of the nose or mouth
* Direct contact
* Airborne droplets
* Very contagious in the first 2-4 days of infection
* Incubation period (time between infection and the appearance of symptoms): 2-8 days
* Infection usually occurs between November and April

**Symptoms**

* Cough – which usually worsens within 1-2 days
  + Breathing becomes more rapid
  + May hear wheezing (high-pitched purring or whistling sound produced during breathing out)
* Nasal congestion
* May have fever
* Difficulty feeding due to increased work of breathing and congestion
* Mild symptoms in children > 2 years

**When to call 911?**

* Severe difficulty breathing
  + Struggling for each breath
  + Grunting noises with each breath OR
  + Unable to cry because of difficulty breathing
* Slow, shallow and weak breathing
* Bluish color of the lips, face or nail beds
* Very sleepy and not alert

**When to call your doctor?**

* Difficulty breathing
* Child is retracting
  + Skin is being pulled in between the ribs while breathing
* Rapid breathing
  + Age 0-2 months: > 60 breaths/min
  + Age 2-12 months: > 50 breaths/min
* Signs of dehydration
* Child is < 3 months and has a fever

**Diagnosis**

* May be confirmed by nasal swab in office

**Treatment**

* Suctioning nose with bulb syringe and 1-2 drops of saline solution
* Cool mist humidifier
* Push fluids
* Doctor may prescribe bronchodilator (helps to open the airways)
* Antibiotics are not used to treat viral infections

**Prevention**

* Good hand washing – best way to prevent infection!!
  + Make sure everybody washes their hands before touching your baby!
* Avoid close contact with infected individuals
* Avoid crowded areas (i.e. shopping malls), especially during winter months
* Keep your baby away from tobacco smoke
* For high-risk infants (premature infants, infants with any chronic conditions):
  + Restrict child care participation during the winter months
  + Immunize against the flu starting at 6 months (parents should be immunized as well)