

December Newsletter

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RSV

RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) cases have increased dramatically this fall. RSV is a single-stranded RNA virus that can cause symptoms including nasal drainage, cough, fever, and wheezing. The RSV virus is spread directly from person to person by touching contaminated surfaces, sharing drinks, and less commonly through large aerosol droplets after an infected person coughs or sneezes. Studies have shown that RSV viruses can survive for many hours on hands and fomites such as clothes, eating utensils, and furniture. After exposure to RSV, the incubation period lasts between 2 and 8 days.

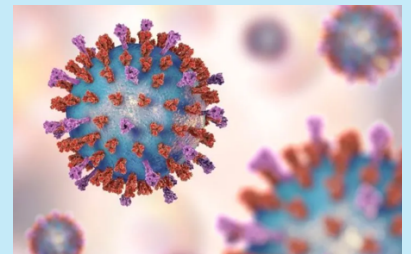
An RSV infection can lead to croup and bronchiolitis. Bronchiolitis is a condition that includes lower respiratory bronchiole inflammation, leading to wheezing in young children. Symptoms of RSV include nasal drainage, fever, cough, wheezing, and respiratory distress. If there is concern for RSV, a child should be evaluated by a healthcare provider.

Nasal swabs are typically used for either PCR tests or antigen tests to diagnose RSV. Healthcare providers can determine if a child needs further treatment based on the severity of RSV.

Children under the age of five are the most vulnerable to RSV. Children under age 5 are more likely to experience respiratory distress from RSV, which can require hospitalization. While there is no routinely used antiviral medication that treats RSV in otherwise healthy children, nebulized medication is often used to reduce airway inflammation.

Reinfection with RSV is not prevented by previous infection, but severe infections are reduced by previous infection.

In otherwise healthy adults, RSV is usually mild and self-limiting. RSV commonly causes mild upper respiratory symptoms in adults, such as nasal drainage and coughing. RSV can cause severe lower respiratory symptoms in elderly adults and adults who are Immunocompromised.



In summary, RSV is a virus with the potential to cause significant respiratory symptoms in children. Good hand hygiene and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces can significantly reduce the likelihood of RSV infection.

Sources:

Barr F. Respiratory syncytial virus infection. UpToDate. https://www.uptodate.com/contents/respiratory-syncytial-virus-infection-treatment?search=rsv+hospitalization&source=search_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage_type=default&display_rank=1#H3129033651. Accessed December 1, 2022.

RSV (respiratory syncytial virus). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>. Published October 28, 2022. Accessed December 1, 2022.