



## RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV)

### WHAT IS RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV)?

- Respiratory syncytial virus, known as RSV, is a contagious virus that is a frequent cause of the common cold.
- It can occur in children and adults causing a respiratory infection with mild symptoms but some people get very sick and need hospital treatment.
- There is no vaccine for RSV and infections are usually highest in autumn or winter in Victoria.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF RSV?

The most common symptoms are:

- Runny nose
- Difficulty breathing
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fever
- Cyanosis (bluish or greyish colour of the skin)

### RSV IN CHILDREN

- RSV is a common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children under one year old.
- They can be unsettled and have difficulty feeding.
- RSV can also cause wheezing and if your child has asthma, it is likely to trigger their asthma symptoms.

### HOW IS RSV SPREAD?

- RSV is highly contagious and can be spread by droplets made when people with the virus cough or sneeze.
- It can also be spread by touching surfaces or objects that have virus droplets from an infected person.
- Someone with RSV is infectious for 3-8 days after symptoms begin but could last longer if one has weakened immune system.

### WHO IS AT RISK SEVERE ILLNESS FROM RSV?

RSV can affect anyone and usually causes a mild infection. However, some people are at increased risk of severe illness including:

- Babies younger than 6 months old, especially if they have a weakened immune system, lung or heart disease, or were born prematurely. These babies may need admission to hospital to help their breathing and hydration.
- Children with viral wheeze or asthma may have symptoms triggered by RSV.
- Older adults, especially those with chronic heart or lung disease or weakened immune systems.



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### HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING RSV?

- Maintain good hand hygiene and cough etiquette, especially if you have respiratory symptoms
- Stay at home if unwell and keep sick children home until they are better
- Regularly clean surfaces and toys that may be contaminated with droplets using a household detergent
- Avoid sharing toys, cups, glasses and eating utensils
- Avoid contact with high-risk people, such as infants, older people and people with weakened immune system until your symptoms have improved
- In Residential aged care facilities, isolate or restrict the infected resident from group activities until their symptoms resolve and monitor other residents for respiratory symptoms.

### HOW IS RSV MANAGED?

Most cases of RSV are mild and can be treated with rest at home.

If worried, healthdirect can be called on 1800 022 222 for free 24-hour health advice or make an appointment to see a doctor.

If your child has RSV:

- Keep them home if they feel unwell. Only return to normal activities (kindergarten, school, etc.) once symptoms have stopped.
- Encourage your child to drink small amounts of fluids more frequently. If an infant has RSV, give them small amounts of fluid (breastmilk, formula or water) regularly.
- Visit your GP if your child:
  - has a high temperature (fever) above 38 degrees and they do not look well
  - their nose is filled with mucus, and they are having difficulty feeding
  - the cough becomes worse, or they start coughing up mucus
  - the child is dehydrated
  - they are a baby and refusing to breast- or bottle feed and are irritable

### OUTBREAKS:

- RSV is a notifiable disease.
- The Gippsland Region Public Health Unit monitors trends in laboratory reported RSV cases within the Gippsland Region and supports outbreak prevention and management in high-risk settings such as residential aged care facilities and childcare centres.

### Additional Information:

[Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) - Better Health Channel](#)

Via QR Code:

