

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

How to protect your baby from infection

What is Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)?

RSV is like a cold. It is caused by a virus that affects the lungs and airways most often during the fall and winter months. Studies say that almost all children have had RSV at least once by the time they are 3 years old. It is one of the most common viruses affecting babies and small children and the most frequent cause of chest infections in childhood.

Is RSV serious?

Most babies get a bad cold. Babies who could get very sick from this virus are those who:

- are born prematurely,
- have breathing problems, or
- have certain types of heart problems.



This is because the RSV infection can go to the lungs. The baby can get a chest infection called bronchiolitis and/or pneumonia. If this happens, your baby could need extra oxygen or help to breathe.

How easy is it for babies to get RSV?

It is very easy to catch RSV. It can be spread by any physical contact such as touching, kissing, or shaking hands with an infected person. It can also be spread at close distances when an infected person sneezes or coughs. The virus can also live for hours on a table top, used tissue, or on the skin.

Clean your hands often. This helps reduce the spread of RSV to your baby, your family, and others.

How do I know my baby has RSV?

You might notice any of these signs:

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Cough
- A fever less than 38.5°C
- Not feeling hungry
- Difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
- Unusual or long pauses of breathing
- Wheezing
- Difficulty feeding



How do I protect my baby against RSV?

- **Clean your hands** each time before touching your baby and ask others to do the same. Use warm water and soap, or alcohol based hand rub.
- Breastfeed your baby. It can help protect your child from catching RSV.
- Keep people who have colds or who are sick away from your baby. Say '**Do not visit**' to family and friends who are sick.
- If you feel sick, you should stay home until you are feeling better to protect your baby and others in the NICU.
- Do not share personal items such as cups, washcloths, and towels with people who are sick.
- Do not smoke, and keep baby away from second hand smoke.

