



Central Michigan District Health Department

Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities



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Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

What is RSV?

RSV stands for Respiratory Syncytial Virus. RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in one to two weeks, but in infants and older adults, RSV can be serious. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children younger than 1 year of age in the United States.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

Four to six days after getting infected with RSV, a person shows symptoms.

- Runny nose
- Decrease appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever,
- Wheezing

These symptoms usually appear in stages, rather than all at once. In young infants, the only symptoms maybe be irritability, decreased activity and difficulty breathing. Almost all children will have had an RSV infection by their second birthday.

How is RSV spread?

RSV can by spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes; the virus droplets can get in your eyes, nose, or mouth.

What is the treatment?

Most RSV infections go away on their own in a week or two. While there is not specific treatment for RSV infection, you can manage a fever and pain with fever reducers and pain relievers. Drink enough fluids to prevent dehydrations. Severe symptoms of RSV include difficulty breathing, not drinking enough fluids, or worsening of symptoms. If any of these occur, call your doctor.

What can I do to protect myself?

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve; not your hand.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils, with others.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs and mobile devices.