

RSV Viral Health Update: October 2022

It is that time of year again where we see colds, influenzas and respiratory illnesses. It is hard to always determine which one it is and how serious it will be. There are two age groups that are always at the greatest risk; infants (0-1yr) and those over 65 years of age with chronic disease. Both groups can have a weakened immune system which increases the risk as well. Currently we are seeing a rise of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). RSV is the most common virus that can affect the lungs and breathing tubes. This presents as the common cold for many people, but can become very serious for others.

Typical symptoms include:

- Runny nose
- Coughing
- Fever
- Decreased appetite
- Irritability
- Lethargic
- Sneezing
- Wheezing

Typically it lasts up to a week, with day 3 and 4 being the worst. The cough can last up to a couple of weeks. Children are typically contagious 5-8 days. RSV is very contagious and is spread through droplets released into the air when we sneeze, cough or by touching contaminated surfaces.

How is RSV treated?

Most of the time it is mild and doesn't need treatment. However if a fever persists longer than 3 days, you have trouble breathing, lips look blue, or infant is unable to suck or drink, immediately seek medical attention. When people are hospitalized it is typically to monitor oxygen levels, provide fluids for dehydration and monitor worsening symptoms. This is a VIRUS, so you won't be given antibiotics. You can help to alleviate and manage symptoms with: ibuprofen (for 6 months or older), Tylenol, cough syrup, Echinacea oil, honey tea, lots of fluids and extra rest. Nebulizers or inhalers may be ordered for specific patients such as those who have weakened immune system, have other underlying health conditions, or decline quickly with respiratory illnesses.

In Minnesota there have been 120 cases hospitalized, with 70% of pediatric beds currently being used by RSV patients. RSV hospitalizations have doubled since the last week of September in Minnesota. Over 57,000 hospitalizations, 500,000 emergency department visits and 1.5 million outpatient clinic visits among children less than 5 years of age are attributed to RSV infections each year in the United States. RSV-associated deaths among children older than 5 years of age are thought to be uncommon, estimated at 100-500 per year. Among US adults, an estimated 177,000 hospitalizations and 14,000 deaths associated with RSV infections occur annually.

Prevention is KEY!

- Wash your hands
- Stay home when you don't feel well
- Stay away from those not feeling well
- Build your immune system with supplements, vitamins and well-balanced nutrition

Contact your healthcare provider if your child:

- Has fever for more than 72 hours
- Is not eating or is vomiting
- Not having wet diapers or
- Is coughing so hard they are choking or vomiting

Contact your healthcare provider if an older adult has:

- Fever above 102.5
- Difficulty breathing or drop in O2 sats (with oximeter) to below 90%
- Condition worsens rapidly after choking