



RSV

(respiratory syncytial virus)

What is it?

- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a respiratory virus that infects the respiratory tract
- Symptoms may include coughing, wheezing, sneezing, runny nose, fever and decrease in appetite
- Very young infants may experience irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties
- RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children under 1 year of age, and almost all children will have been infected with the virus by their second birthday
- Premature infants, children under 2 years of age with chronic heart or lung conditions, children and adults with weakened immune systems and seniors 65 and over are at increased risk of severe disease

How is it spread?

- RSV is spread by droplets and contact
- Droplet spread occurs when someone with RSV coughs or sneezes into another person's eyes, nose or mouth
- RSV is spread in the environment when people cough or sneeze onto surfaces, or touch surfaces with contaminated hands
- The virus can survive for hours on solid surfaces such as doorknobs and telephone handsets
- The virus can be picked up when someone touches a contaminated surface and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth
- RSV exposure risk increases in areas where people live in close contact, such as in long-term care facilities

Where is it found?

- Humans are the only source of RSV
- It is found in the upper respiratory tract
- It can live on contaminated hands for up to 1/2 hour
- It may be found on environmental surfaces for several hours after they have been contaminated by respiratory secretions

Prevention and control

- Clean hands well and often with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
- Instruct residents and staff to cough into a tissue or their sleeve and clean their hands after sneezing or coughing
- Provide a private room for patients/residents if possible, otherwise, use spacing between beds to prevent transmission
- Use droplet and contact precautions (in addition to routine practices) when caring for anyone with a new or worsening cough and/or fever
- Clean and disinfect all surfaces on a regular basis to reduce risk of contact exposure from influenza