

# What you need to know about Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)



Nearly all children will have their first mild, flu-like RSV infection by the time they are 2 years old.

RSV is a common virus that can cause illness in babies and children, more often during the winter months. However, **sometimes RSV can become more serious**, infecting the airways and lungs.

## What do I need to know?

Some babies have an increased risk of serious RSV infection.

Babies born premature, and children less than 2 years old with certain lung conditions or congenital heart disease (CHD), are at increased risk of RSV bronchiolitis or pneumonia and hospitalization.

Babies with bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) also called Chronic Lung Disease (CLD) who required breathing support (mechanical ventilation), or needed extra oxygen, are at higher risk of getting very sick.

## What are RSV symptoms?

RSV infection can start like a common cold, and symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Fussiness
- Refusing to eat



**Important to know:** RSV can stay on hard surfaces for several hours.

## Can RSV become more serious?

Yes. RSV can infect the lungs and cause RSV bronchiolitis or pneumonia. It is important to watch for these more serious symptoms:

- Deeper and more frequent cough
- Difficulty or fast breathing, wheezing
- Bluish nails or lips
- Dehydration (dry diapers, dry mouth)
- Difficulty breastfeeding or bottle-feeding
- Slow or stopped breathing (apnea) \*This symptom needs urgent medical attention

## How does RSV spread?

- By touching, kissing, coughing and sneezing
- In crowded public areas, and gatherings with family or friends

## What are things I can do to reduce the risk for my baby?

- Wash your hands before touching your baby
- Don't kiss your baby if you have a cold or fever
- Keep anyone who is feeling unwell away from your baby
- Avoid crowded areas like daycares, shopping malls, or gatherings with family or friends
- Never smoke near your baby (or inside your home)

Ask your baby's doctor about ways to reduce the risk of RSV infection and hospitalization.

**Important: Always call your baby's doctor if you are worried about any symptoms, or 911 Emergency, especially if your baby is in breathing distress.**



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**Resources for more information:**  
[www.canadianpremies.org](http://www.canadianpremies.org)

