

# Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

## Information for Healthcare Providers

### What is RSV & how is it spread?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus is a common respiratory virus that causes mild, cold-like symptoms such as runny nose, cough, sneezing, fever, wheezing, and decreased appetite. NOTE: In very young infants, the only symptoms may be breathing difficulties, irritability, and decreased activity.

RSV is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, direct contact with the virus such as kissing the face of a child with RSV or touching a surface contaminated with the virus and then touching your face prior to washing your hands. RSV usually begins in the Fall and peaks in the winter. It can be serious for infants and older adults. It is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in infants younger than 1 year of age in the United States.

### How do you test for RSV?

Commonly used clinical laboratory tests are:

- Real-time reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR)
- Antigen testing, which is highly sensitive in children, but not sensitive in adults

### What is the treatment for RSV?

Most infections resolve on their own within a week or two. There is no specific treatment for RSV, however researchers are developing vaccines and antivirals. A drug named palivizumab (Synagis) is available to prevent severe illness in certain infants and children who are at high risk for severe disease. It is given in monthly intramuscular injections during the RSV season.

Individuals at high risk for severe disease include:

- Premature infants
- Infants, specifically those < 6 months of age
- Children < 2 years old with chronic lung disease or congenital heart disease
- Children who are immunosuppressed
- Children who have neuromuscular disorders, including those with difficulty swallowing or clearing mucous secretions
- Adults 65 years and older
- Adults with chronic lung or heart disease
- Adults with weakened immune systems

### How is RSV prevented?

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Wear a mask that fits well
- Ensure adequate ventilation in your facility
- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Avoid sharing utensils and cups with others and shaking hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces thoroughly
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands

