

RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV)

What is RSV?

RSV is the most common cause of respiratory infection in infants and young children. Most children have had RSV by the age of 3 years. Infants are most at risk for more serious infection.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

The symptoms are often like that of the common cold:

- Runny nose
- Cough
- Low grade fever
- Irritability
- Decreased feeding
- Decreased activity

Signs which indicate a more serious infection include:

- Persistent coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Very rapid breathing
- Wheezing

How is RSV spread?

It is very easily spread in the respiratory droplets by coughing or sneezing. RSV can live on environmental surfaces for hours and can be spread on the hands of people who touch these surfaces.

When does RSV infection occur?

In Newfoundland and Labrador, RSV usually occurs between January and May of each year.

Can RSV infection be prevented?

- Hand hygiene is the most important way to prevent the spread of RSV:
 - Promote hand washing before touching your baby
 - Encourage children to wash their hands especially after returning from school
- Breastfeed your baby
- Do not share personal items such as pacifiers, eating utensils, toothbrushes
- Keep your child away from people who have colds
- Try to avoid crowded places during the RSV season
- Keep your child away from smokers, second-hand smoke and clothes that smell of smoke
- Get the flu shot for you and your child (6 months – 5 years)

What is the treatment for RSV infection?

- Since RSV is a virus, antibiotics are not used
- Treat the symptoms:
 - Fever medication if needed
 - Small frequent feedings
 - Rest
 - Medical assessment if symptoms worsen
- Infants or children with more serious infection may require hospitalization