

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) in Florida

CDC Health Advisory

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RSV is an RNA virus which causes upper respiratory illnesses and is primarily spread via respiratory droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and through direct contact with a contaminated surface. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children under one year of age in the United States. Infants, young children, and older adults with chronic medical conditions are at risk of severe disease from RSV infection. Florida's RSV season is longer than the rest of the nation.

Each year in the United States, RSV leads to on average approximately 58,000 hospitalizations with 100-500 deaths among children younger than 5 years old and 177,000 hospitalizations with 14,000 deaths among adults aged 65 years or older.

People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within 4 to 6 days after getting infected. Symptoms usually appear in stages and not all at once.

In infants younger than six months-RSV infection may result in symptoms of irritability (fussiness), poor feeding, lethargy, and/or apnea (temporary cessation of breathing, especially during sleep) with or without fever.

In older infants and young children symptoms of rhinorrhea (runny nose) and decreased appetite may appear one to three days before cough, often followed by sneezing, fever, and sometimes wheezing.

In adults symptoms are typically consistent with upper respiratory tract infections, including rhinorrhea, (runny nose) pharyngitis, cough, headache, fatigue, and fever.

Adults at highest risk for severe RSV infection include

- Older adults, especially those 65 years and older
- Adults with chronic heart or lung disease
- Adults with weakened immune systems

Severe RSV Infection

When an adult gets RSV infection, they typically have mild cold-like symptoms. But RSV can sometimes lead to serious conditions such as

- Pneumonia (infection of the lungs)
- More severe symptoms for people with asthma
- More severe symptoms for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (a chronic disease of the lungs that makes it hard to breathe)
- Congestive heart failure (when the heart can't pump blood and oxygen to the body's tissues)

Older adults who get very sick from RSV may need to be hospitalized. Some may even die. Older adults are at greater risk than young adults for serious complications from RSV because our immune systems weaken when we are older.

Recommendations

- Wash hands
- Keep hands off your face
- Avoid close contact with sick people
 - Cover your cough and sneezes
 - Clean and disinfect surfaces
 - Stay home if you are sick
 - Talk to your healthcare provider-
- There is no specific treatment for RSV infection other than symptom management.
- Real-time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) is the preferred method for testing for respiratory viruses. Additional testing may be needed in more serious cases, experts say, and can include a chest X-ray or CT scan.

References:

1. Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/high-risk/older-adults.html>
2. Increased Interseasonal Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Activity in Parts of the Southern United States. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2021/pdf/CDC-HAN-443-Increased-Interseasonal-RSV-Activity-06.10.21.pdf>