



## Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

### Overview

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) causes infections of the lungs and respiratory tract. It's so common that most children have been infected with the virus by age 2. Respiratory syncytial (sin-SISH-ul) virus can also infect adults.

In adults and older, healthy children, RSV symptoms are mild and typically mimic the common cold. Self-care measures are usually all that's needed to relieve any discomfort.

RSV can cause severe infection in some people, including babies 12 months and younger (infants), especially premature infants, older adults, people with heart and lung disease, or anyone with a weak immune system (immunocompromised).

### Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of respiratory syncytial virus infection most commonly appear about four to six days after exposure to the virus. In adults and older children, RSV usually causes mild cold-like signs and symptoms. These may include:

- Congested or runny nose
- Dry cough
- Low-grade fever
- Sore throat
- Sneezing
- Headache

### In severe cases

RSV infection can spread to the lower respiratory tract, causing pneumonia or bronchiolitis — inflammation of the small airway passages entering the lungs. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Severe cough
- Wheezing — a high-pitched noise that's usually heard on breathing out (exhaling)
- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing — the person may prefer to sit up rather than lie down
- Bluish color of the skin due to lack of oxygen (cyanosis)
- Infants are most severely affected by RSV. Signs and symptoms of severe RSV infection in infants include:
  - Short, shallow and rapid breathing
  - Struggling to breathe — chest muscles and skin pull inward with each breath
- Cough
- Poor feeding
- Unusual tiredness (lethargy)
- Irritability

Most children and adults recover in one to two weeks, although some might have repeated wheezing. Severe or life-threatening infection requiring a hospital stay may occur in premature infants or in anyone who has chronic heart or lung problems.

### RSV and COVID-19

Because RSV and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) are both types of respiratory viruses, some symptoms of RSV and COVID-19 can be similar. In children, COVID-19 often results in mild symptoms such as fever, runny nose and cough. For adults with COVID-19, symptoms may be more severe and may include trouble breathing.

Having RSV may lower immunity and increase the risk of getting COVID-19 — for kids and adults. And these



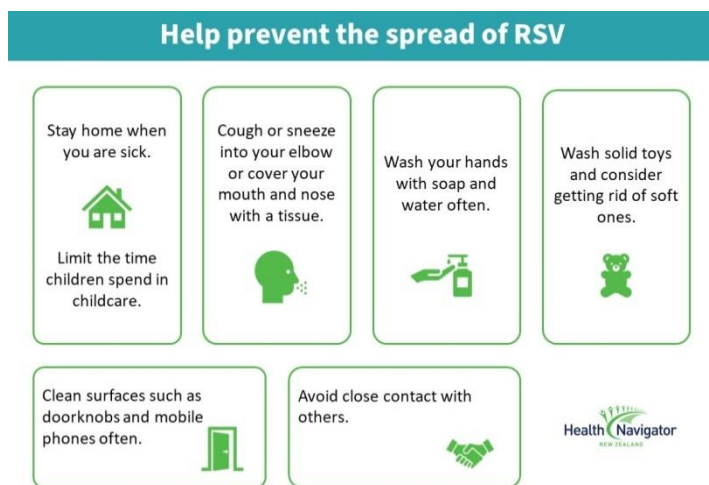
infections may occur together, which can worsen the severity of COVID-19 illness.

If you have symptoms of a respiratory illness, your doctor may recommend testing for COVID-19.

### When to see a doctor

Seek immediate medical attention if your child — or anyone at risk of severe RSV infection — has difficulty breathing, a high fever, or a blue color to the skin, particularly on the lips and in the nail beds.

[www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/respiratory-syncytial-virus/symptoms-causes](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/respiratory-syncytial-virus/symptoms-causes)



## Comparing Flu and RSV

Posted on March 17, 2022

### What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus, otherwise known as RSV, is a virus that typically spreads during flu season. RSV can be serious, as it is the single most common cause of pneumonia in infants.

### How are RSV and flu similar?

Both viruses affect children and older adults.

Both viruses have similar symptoms like coughing, sneezing, and fever.

Both viruses can be especially dangerous for people with asthma.

Both viruses are spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

### How are RSV and flu different

RSV is more common among children – almost all children will have had an RSV infection by their second birthday

Flu vaccination can be given every year starting at age six months, but there is no vaccine for RSV

Flu treatments are available through antiviral medications, but there is no specific medicine to treat RSV

Flu affects people of all ages, not just children and older adults

### Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>

<https://www.contemporarypediatrics.com/view/influenza-and-rsv-how-suspect-diagnose-treat>

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/rsv-vs-flu-vs-pneumonia-sorting-out-your-childs-fever-and-cough/>

### RSV Vaccine Updates:

- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) can cause dangerous infections, especially in young babies, older adults, and people with certain health conditions.
- Currently, three companies have reported positive results of late-stage clinical trials on RSV vaccines. Some of these vaccines are being “fast-tracked” by the FDA. This means they may become FDA approved more quickly.
- There’s no RSV vaccine that’s approved by the FDA yet. But you can prevent the spread of RSV in other ways. Washing your hands often and disinfecting surfaces can lower the chances of you or your child getting RSV.

[www.goodrx.com/health-topic/vaccines/rsv-vaccine](https://www.goodrx.com/health-topic/vaccines/rsv-vaccine)