

CDC Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection (RSV)



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How RSV Spreads

WHAT TO KNOW

- RSV can spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, by direct contact with someone who has RSV, or by touching a contaminated surface.
- In most regions of the United States, RSV season generally starts during the fall and peaks in the winter.
- Everyone can take action to help prevent the spread of RSV.



RSV transmission

RSV can spread when:

- A person who has RSV coughs or sneezes near you
- You get virus droplets from a cough or sneeze in your eyes, nose, or mouth
- You have direct contact with the virus, like kissing the face of a child with RSV
- You touch a surface that has the virus on it, like a doorknob, and then touch your face before washing your hands

Anyone can get RSV, but typically most people get RSV for the first time as an infant or toddler. Nearly all children will get RSV before their second birthday. However, repeat infections may occur throughout life.

Who is at risk?

[Infants, some young children](#), and [older adults](#) are at increased risk of severe RSV. Learn about [RSV immunizations](#).



People with RSV are usually contagious for 3 to 8 days and may become contagious a day or two before they start showing signs of illness. However, some infants and people with weakened immune systems can continue to spread the virus for 4 weeks or longer, even after they stop showing symptoms. Children are often exposed to and infected with RSV outside the home, such as in school or childcare centers. They can then transmit the virus to other members of the family.

RSV can survive for many hours on hard surfaces, such as tables and crib rails. It typically lives on soft surfaces, such as tissues and hands, for shorter amounts of time.

How to prevent spread

Everyone can take actions to help reduce the spread of RSV and other respiratory viruses.

- Practice [good hygiene](#) by covering your coughs and sneezes, washing or sanitizing your hands often, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- Take [steps for cleaner air](#), such as bringing in fresh outside air, purifying indoor air, or gathering outdoors.
- [Stay home](#) and away from others when you are sick.

You can also use additional tools like [masks](#), [physical distancing](#), and [testing](#).

Keep Reading:

[CDC's Respiratory Virus Guidance](#)

When is RSV season?

In most regions of the United States and other areas with similar climates, RSV season generally starts during fall and peaks in the winter. The timing and severity of RSV season in a given community can vary from year to year.

Over the course of each fall and winter respiratory virus season, RSV reaches all corners of the continental United States. For these reasons, it is important to be aware of local RSV activity in your area.

Tracking RSV



CDC monitors RSV activity in the United States. You can check CDC's [Respiratory Illness Data Channel](#) to see RSV activity in your area.

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases; Coronavirus and Other Respiratory Viruses Division](#)