

# CDC Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection (RSV)



AUGUST 30, 2024

## RSV in Infants and Young Children

### WHAT TO KNOW

- RSV can be dangerous for infants and some young children.
- RSV is the leading cause of infant hospitalization in the U.S.
- Immunizations can protect babies from getting very sick from RSV.



## Overview

RSV can be dangerous for infants and some young children. Each year in the United States, an estimated 58,000–80,000 children younger than 5 years are hospitalized due to RSV.

Children at greatest risk for severe illness from RSV include:

- Infants and young children (the younger the age, the higher the risk)
- [American Indian and Alaska Native children](#)
- Children born prematurely
- Children with chronic lung disease or congenital (present from birth) heart disease
- Children with weakened immune systems
- Children with severe cystic fibrosis
- Children who have neuromuscular disorders, especially those who have difficulty swallowing or clearing mucus secretions

### Did you know?

Nearly every child will get RSV by the time they are 2 years old.



## Symptoms in infants and young children

RSV may not be severe when it first starts. However, it can become more severe a few days into the illness. Early symptoms of RSV may include:

- Runny nose
- Eating or drinking less
- Cough, which may progress to wheezing or difficulty breathing

## RSV in very young Infants

Infants who get RSV almost always show symptoms. This is different from adults, who can sometimes get RSV and not have any symptoms. In very young infants (less than 6 months old), the symptoms of RSV may include:

- Irritability
- Decreased activity
- Eating or drinking less

- Apnea (pauses in breathing for more than 10 seconds)

Many infants will not have a fever with RSV infection.

## Severe RSV

Most of the time RSV causes a mild, cold-like illness, but it can also cause severe illness such as:

- Bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung)
- Pneumonia (infection of the lungs)

Two to three out of every 100 infants under 6 months are hospitalized with RSV every year. Those who are hospitalized may require oxygen, IV fluids (if they aren't eating and drinking), and mechanical ventilation (a machine to help with breathing). Most improve with this type of supportive care and are discharged in a few days.

### When to seek emergency care



Seek medical attention if your child is having difficulty breathing, not drinking enough fluids, or experiencing worsening symptoms.

## Immunizations to protect infants from severe RSV

CDC recommends you use one of these two tools to protect your baby from getting very sick with RSV:

- An RSV vaccine given to the mother during pregnancy
- An RSV immunization given to infants and some older babies

Most infants will not need both.



### [Immunizations to Protect Infants](#)

Information about RSV immunization to protect your baby from severe RSV illness.

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## RSV in Infants and Young Children

Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common virus that affects the lungs. RSV season starts in the fall and peaks in the winter in most regions of the U.S.

**Protect your young child from RSV.**

**There are two options to protect babies from severe RSV. Most babies only need one, not both.**

**RSV vaccine** given during pregnancy:

- Protection passed to baby during pregnancy
- Recommended when 32-36 weeks pregnant
- Usually given during September-January

**RSV antibody** given to the baby:

- Directly provides protection to baby
- Recommended for babies younger than 8 months
- Usually given during October-March

A dose of RSV antibody is also recommended for the following children between the ages of 8 and 19 months entering their second RSV season:

- Children who have chronic lung disease from being born prematurely
- Children who are severely immunocompromised
- Children with cystic fibrosis who have severe disease
- American Indian and Alaska Native children

**Talk to your healthcare provider to determine which option is best for you and your baby.**



**RSV is the LEADING CAUSE of infant hospitalization in the U.S.**



[www.cdc.gov/rsv](http://www.cdc.gov/rsv)

This fact sheet describes how to protect your child from RSV infection.

[RSV in Infants and Young Children](#) [PDF](#) | [En español](#) [PDF](#)

#### SOURCES

#### CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases; Coronavirus and Other Respiratory Viruses Division