



# Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV): A Guide for Parents

Did you know that most babies get RSV before their second birthday? While most healthy infants experience mild, cold-like symptoms, some are at risk of severe RSV.

Your baby's health is a top priority, but caring for a sick baby can be overwhelming. Stay informed by learning about preventive measures that can help keep your baby safe and healthy. Always consult your baby's healthcare provider for additional guidance.

## What is RSV and who's at risk?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus, or RSV for short, is a common virus that can affect the lungs and breathing passages, especially in babies. All babies can get RSV, but some are at higher risk than others, including those who:

- Were born preterm
- Have health issues, such as asthma or other breathing problems
- Are in daycare
- Are exposed to secondhand smoke
- Have weakened immune systems

## When is RSV most common?

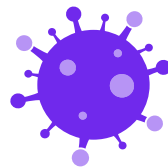
RSV can strike at any time, but it's more prevalent from October to April. This is known as RSV season, so it's important to be extra careful during these months.



## How do I know if my baby has RSV?

Knowing the signs and symptoms of RSV is crucial for early intervention. Keep an eye out for:

- Coughing
- Fever
- Irritability
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Sluggishness or inactivity
- Trouble breathing
- Wheezing



These symptoms usually last around one to two weeks.



For more information, visit [marchofdimes.org](https://www.marchofdimes.org)

## How is RSV diagnosed?

Most of the time, healthcare providers can diagnose RSV through a physical examination. In some cases, they may take a mucus sample from your baby's nose to confirm the diagnosis.

## What are some ways to manage RSV?

While there's no specific medicine to treat RSV, there are ways to help your baby feel better:

- Rest and fluids: Ensure your baby gets plenty of rest and stays hydrated.
- Clearing mucus: Use a rubber suction bulb to gently clear mucus from your baby's nose, especially before feedings.
- Humidifier: A cool-mist humidifier can ease your baby's breathing.
- Fever management: Consult your baby's healthcare provider before using acetaminophen to reduce fever.



## What can I do to protect my baby from RSV?

Here are seven things you can do to keep your baby safe from getting RSV:

1. Keep your baby away from people who are sneezing, coughing, or sick.
2. Make sure everyone who touches your baby has clean hands.
3. Cover your coughs and sneezes.
4. Avoid crowded places.
5. Don't allow anyone to smoke near your baby.
6. Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces in your home.
7. Stay home when you're sick.



## What should I do if my baby's at high risk for severe RSV?

Talk to your baby's healthcare provider about ways to prevent RSV, especially if your baby falls into a high-risk category. You can also:

- Consider keeping your baby home from daycare during the RSV season, which is most common from October to April.
- Inquire about a preventative medication for high-risk babies given during fall and winter months.
- Ask about new and recently available treatments (such as protective antibody treatments), which may help reduce the risk of severe RSV infection in your baby.

Seek medical attention if your baby seems very ill, especially if they have trouble breathing. In very young infants, irritability, sluggishness, decreased appetite, or breathing pauses, require immediate attention.

## Can my baby get RSV more than once?

Yes, it's possible for babies to get RSV again, but subsequent infections are usually milder. Watch for signs like irritability, sluggishness, decreased appetite, or breathing pauses, especially in very young infants.

### Additional resources:

[RSV in Infants and Young Children](#)  
[RSV: When It's More Than Just a Cold](#)

[RSV Symptoms and Diagnosis](#)  
[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

