



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Respiratory Syncytial Virus

(RSV)

What is the respiratory syncytial virus?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a contagious virus that affects the nose, throat, and lungs

Can RSV cause serious illness?

Yes- RSV is the most common cause of hospitalization for infants, and more than 100,000 older adults are hospitalized each year. Complications include pneumonia and bronchiolitis. However, most older children and adults only have mild, cold-like symptoms.

How do you get it?

Transmission occurs by touching a surface that has the virus on it, close contact with an infected person, or inhaling droplets when they cough or sneeze.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

Common symptoms of RSV include runny nose, coughing, sneezing, and decrease in appetite. Some people have a fever or wheezing.

Young infants may have different symptoms, including irritability, decreased appetite and activity, and difficulty breathing.

How long is a person with RSV contagious?

Most people are contagious for 3 to 8 days. Infants and people with weakened immune systems can continue to be contagious for up to 4 weeks, even if symptoms have stopped.

What is the treatment for RSV?

There is no specific medication for RSV. Supportive care includes treating specific symptoms.

Should a person with RSV stay away from work or school?

Yes, RSV is very contagious. It is important to stay away from others until you feel better. You can also protect others by covering your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, wearing a mask, and washing your hands frequently.

How can you keep from getting RSV?

Special care should be taken around infants and those at higher risk of severe disease:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Clean and disinfect surfaces where people frequently touch and where germs from coughs and sneezes may land.

What immunizations are available?

Infants should receive RSV antibodies if younger than 8 months old and their mother was not vaccinated during that pregnancy.

Pregnant people should get the maternal RSV vaccine between 32-36 weeks to protect their newborn.

All adults 75 years old and older, and adults 50-74 with risk factors should get RSV vaccine.

For more information, visit Hawaii Department of Health Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) at https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease_listing/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv/