

Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency

Lancaster County Health Advisory Council

Important Information Regarding RSV

11/3/2022

What it is...

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a major cause of severe lower respiratory infections. Anyone can be infected, but RSV most often causes serious illness in infants, young children and older adults. RSV circulates in a seasonal manner, usually peaking during late fall and early winter. Respiratory viruses, including RSV, typically circulate during the cold months of the year when conditions allow these viruses to live longer and transmit more easily, and when people tend to gather indoors more often.

What it does...

Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung) and pneumonia (infection of the lungs) in children younger than 1 year of age in the United States.

What to expect...

People with RSV infection typically present with fever, cough, wheezing and runny nose. The symptoms might be atypical especially in very young children and infants younger than 6 months where symptoms of irritability, lethargy, and poor feeding may be present. Fever may or may not occur with illness presentation.

What to do...

Persons with acute respiratory symptoms should stay home while ill, especially those who work in health care, childcare, or long-term care, even if they have tested negative for SARS-CoV-2, to prevent exposing vulnerable and high-risk groups to RSV. If you or a child are having trouble breathing, it may be a good idea to seek medical attention from your provider.

It is recommended that people also take precautions to mitigate the spread of RSV. Per CDC guidance, here are some steps you can take:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, not your hands
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils, with others
- Clean frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs and mobile devices

Parents of children at high risk for developing severe RSV disease should help their child, when possible, do the following:

- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid touching their face with unwashed hands
- Limit the time they spend in childcare centers or other potentially contagious settings during periods of high RSV activity. This may help prevent infection and spread of the virus during the RSV season

Stay informed...

For up-to-date information on RSV including case counts, signs/symptoms, spread, prevention, treatment, and more, go to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website or seek other credible sources.

For any questions regarding you or your family's health, consult your chosen primary care provider.

Resources

Pennsylvania Department of Health. (2022, October 27). 2022-PAHAN-668-10-27-ADV, Increased Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Activity Nationally and in Pennsylvania. *Pennsylvania Department of Health*.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, December 18). Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection (RSV). *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.
<https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>