

RSV Respiratory Syncytial Virus



Feb. 2015

Communicable Disease Division
3629 South D Street, Tacoma, WA 98418
(253) 798-6410 (phone) • (253) 798-7666 (fax)

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have recently been exposed to **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)**. RSV is a virus that causes many cases of the common cold and also other respiratory infections, like pneumonia. RSV is a common infection of children and adults and is most often diagnosed in the winter and early spring, but may occur year-round.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

Symptoms include cold-like signs or symptoms for most children. Very young infants may exhibit irritability, poor feeding, lethargy or cyanosis (i.e., turn blue with cough or brief periods of no breathing).

Some other respiratory problems include bronchiolitis with wheezing, or pneumonia. Children with weakened immune systems, prematurity, or heart or lung problems have greater difficulty when ill with this infection.

How is RSV spread?

The virus is spread with direct or close contact with mouth or nose secretion. The virus may live on surfaces for many hours and 30 minutes or more on hands. Before signs or symptoms appear, the infected person starts to shed virus that may infect others. It may take from 2–8 days for symptoms to develop. Before symptoms appear, the infected person starts shedding virus that infects others. Children with RSV generally do not need to be excluded from school or childcare unless the child is particularly uncomfortable and is not able to participate in normal school or childcare activities.

How is RSV diagnosed and treated?

A healthcare provider can identify RSV by culture. When there are large outbreaks in the community, a health care provider may make a diagnosis based on presenting symptoms.

How do you control the spread?

- Make sure adults and children wash hands frequently and thoroughly.
- Teach children to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue or their arm when coughing or sneezing.
- When using a tissue, wash hands well afterwards. Dispose of tissues that contain nasal secretions after each use.
- Ventilate the environment daily.
- Sanitize the surfaces in contact with respiratory secretions.

How do I get more information?

For more information about RSV, contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press "0".