

# RSV:

## IS MY BABY AT RISK?

### WHAT IS RSV?

Respiratory syncytial (sin-SISH-uhl) virus (RSV) is a common, easily spread virus that almost all children catch at least once by the time they turn two. It usually causes moderate to severe cold-like symptoms. In some cases, complications from RSV disease can lead to serious lung infection, hospitalization, and breathing problems.

### IS MY BABY AT RISK FOR COMPLICATIONS OF RSV?

RSV disease is the #1 cause of hospitalizations in the U.S. for babies under one year of age. RSV season usually starts in the fall and runs into the spring, but can be different in certain parts of the country. Ask your baby's doctor when RSV season occurs in your area.

#### Babies who are in any of the following three population categories are at high risk for developing severe RSV disease:

**Being born early.** For premature babies, RSV disease can lead to a serious respiratory tract infection that requires hospitalization.

**Having chronic lung problems.** Babies 24 months or younger who have been treated for chronic lung disease within 6 months of the start of RSV season are at high risk.

**Being born with certain types of heart disease.** Babies 24 months or younger who have been born with certain types of heart disease are also at high risk.

#### Premature infants who have the following risk factors may be at high risk for developing severe RSV disease:

**Having a low birth weight.** Babies born at less than 5½ pounds are at high risk.

**Having school-aged siblings.** RSV is easy to catch, especially if there are other school-aged children in the home, particularly during cold and flu season.

**Attending daycare centers.** RSV can be passed from person to person by touching common items, such as toys, bedding, towels, etc.

**Having a family history of asthma or wheezing.** There is a high risk for severe RSV disease among babies who have a family history of asthma or wheezing.

**Being around tobacco smoke or other air pollutants.** This can irritate the baby's lungs and make it harder to fight RSV disease. Never allow anyone to smoke around your baby.

**Multiple births.** Multiples are at a high risk due to their potential low birth weight and also because there are more children in the household.

**Young chronological age.** Premature babies who are 12 weeks of age or younger at the start of RSV season are at high risk.

**Crowded living conditions.** Households with many people in a small space increase the risk for RSV disease.



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## WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF RSV DISEASE?

It's important to ask your baby's healthcare provider about symptoms to look out for, especially during your baby's first months at home.

If, at any time, you see any of these common RSV disease warning signs, call your baby's healthcare provider right away:

- **Fever. A rectal temperature above 100.4°F (38°C) in infants younger than 3 months of age is cause for concern.**
- **Bluish lips or fingertips**
- **Coughing**
- **Wheezing**
- **Trouble breathing**
- **Rapid breathing**
- **Gasping for breath**

## HOW CAN I HELP TO PROTECT MY BABY?

Since RSV spreads just like a common cold virus, you may want to take a few extra precautions around your family and friends. Here are some ways to help prevent your baby from being exposed during RSV season.



- **Wash your hands thoroughly before touching your baby and make sure that others do the same.**



- **Don't let anyone smoke in your home, or near your baby. Tobacco smoke can increase the risk of severe RSV disease.**



- **Keep your baby's belongings clean, including toys, clothes, bedding, and crib rails.**



- **Keep your baby away from young children and crowds at public places, daycare, and family gatherings.**



- **Avoid sharing your baby's pacifiers, bottles, toys, utensils, etc. with others.**



- **Keep your baby away from anyone with a cold or fever (they may actually have RSV).**

**This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult with a healthcare professional if you have any questions about the health of your child.**

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