



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is the most frequent cause of respiratory disease in infants and young children. Each year, 75,000 to 125,000 children under one year of age are hospitalized due to RSV infection. Almost all children are infected with the virus by their second birthday, but only a small percentage develop severe disease.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

RSV infections normally begin with a runny nose, cough and fever. These symptoms may also be accompanied with difficulty breathing, excess phlegm and wheezing.

How soon do symptoms appear after infection occurs?

Symptoms appear between 2 and 8 days from exposure. Typically symptoms appear 4 to 6 days after exposure.

How is RSV spread?

RSV is easily spread through sneezing, coughing, handling tissues that have not been disposed of properly, and through contact with a person that has touched the nose or mouth of someone who is infected.

How long is RSV contagious?

People infected with RSV are usually contagious for three to eight days. However, some infants and people with weakened immune systems can be contagious for as long as four weeks.

How can I get more information on RSV?

For more information on RSV or any other health issues, call the Sedgwick County Health Department Epidemiology Office at 660-7300. Or visit the Sedgwick County website at www.sedgwickcounty.org.

How is RSV treated?

For individuals with mild disease, no specific treatment is necessary other than the treatment of symptoms (e.g., Tylenol to reduce fever). Children with severe disease may require hospitalization.

How can you prevent RSV?

There is not a vaccine for RSV at this time. Good hygiene is the best and only defense against RSV. RSV is more common from November to April. This is due to children spending more time indoors and in close quarters with others who may be infected.

You can help prevent infection by taking these simple steps:

- Wash hands thoroughly and often.
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing and dispose of tissues properly.
- Stay home or keep children home when ill to avoid spreading the disease.
- Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils.

SOURCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov
Control of Communicable Disease Manual
New York State Department of Health
www.health.state.ny.us/diseases
Red Book 2006 Report of the Committee on
Infectious Diseases
WebMD