

RSV in the Childcare Setting: What is it and what do I do?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus



RSV is a viral disease that primarily affects children but can occur in people of all ages. In babies, young children, and people with weakened immune systems RSV causes lower respiratory

infection and pneumonia. In older children and healthy adults, RSV resembles the common cold. Most people have been infected with RSV by age two and usually during outbreaks in the winter months (November-April).

How is RSV spread?

- Direct contact with infectious materials through eyes, mouth and nose, and possibly through the inhalation of droplets generated by a cough or sneeze, or
- Contact with a surface an infected person has contaminated by touching or coughing on it.
- A child can spread the disease just before symptoms appear, as well as when they have a fever.

Symptoms of RSV

- In babies and young children, symptoms include fever, wheezing, difficulty breathing, and pneumonia.
- In older children and adults symptoms are like moderate to severe cold symptoms such as fever, runny nose, cough, sometimes wheezing

Special Concerns:

- Watch for breathing problems or symptoms that worsen.
- Children who were born premature or have weak immune systems are at risk of developing a severe infection or complications.

Treatment for RSV

- In mild cases, no specific treatment is required except for treatment of symptoms (pain reliever/fever reducer)
- Children with severe disease may require oxygen therapy and/or Ribavirin aerosol.

Prevention of RSV

- Careful and frequent hand washing! (warm water, soap, wash for 20 seconds)
- Proper disposal of tissues used to clean the nose and respiratory secretions.
- Prevent sharing of cups, glasses and utensils.
- Clean and disinfect all surfaces on a regular basis, as well as after contact with ill children.
- Clean and disinfect toys on a regular basis, as well as after contact with ill children.

When to Exclude from Care

- Children often are infectious before symptoms appear. Excluding children with colds or other respiratory illnesses will probably NOT decrease transmission.
- You should exclude until the child has no fever and can tolerate normal activities.

Talking Points for Parents

- Share with parents if RSV has been diagnosed in their child's group.
- Explain the importance of careful and frequent hand washing.
- Share the signs and symptoms of RSV and how it is spread.
- Share your exclusion policy for ill children.
- If you suspect illness, suggest the child see their doctor for diagnosis.

Resources:

Indiana State Department of Health: 317-233-1325 or www.in.gov/isdh/healthinfo/rsv.htm
Information consistent with Caring for our Children 2002: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>

