



Gila County Health & Emergency Management

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Fact Sheet

Background

RSV is a respiratory virus that infects the lungs and breathing passages. Most otherwise healthy people recover from RSV infection in 1 to 2 weeks. The infection can be much more severe in infants, young children, and older adults. In the United States, RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung) and pneumonia in children under 1 year of age.

Symptoms

Most children and adults will develop cold-like symptoms, such as runny nose, cough, fever, fatigue, and decrease in appetite. Wheezing may also occur. In very young infants, irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties may be the only symptoms of infection.

Transmission

RSV is spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or by touching a contaminated surface (such as a doorknob). An infected person can be contagious for up to 10 days after the start of their illness. RSV is easily transmitted to those in close contact, such as family members or other children in a daycare facility.

Diagnosis

Your doctor may suspect RSV based on a physical exam and the time of year (RSV is most common between November and March). During the exam, he or she may use a stethoscope to listen to the lungs for wheezing or other abnormal sounds. Your doctor may also order laboratory tests to check for RSV.

Treatment

Since there is no specific medicine to treat RSV, treatment involves managing the symptoms. Persons with RSV should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Additionally, Tylenol or ibuprofen can be

helpful for relieving fever or pain. In more severe cases, specialized treatment, such as steroids or hospitalization may be needed. Call your doctor if the symptoms interfere with sleeping or eating, or if the patient has difficulty breathing.

Prevention

There is no vaccine for RSV. Frequent hand washing and wiping of hard surfaces with soap and water or disinfectant may help prevent the spread of RSV. Also, persons with cold-like symptoms should:

- Cover their coughs and sneezes
- Wash their hands frequently with soap and water
- Avoid sharing cups or utensils
- Not kiss others
- Avoid contact with high-risk children



For more information

If you need more information, please contact your primary care physician or Gila County Division of Health & Emergency Management at (928) 402-8811.