Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

What is it?

• RSV is a common virus that can cause mild to severe respiratory illness in infants, children and adults.

• It is hard to tell the difference between mild RSV and the common cold. Severe respiratory illness is more common in people who have heart and lung problems or have a weak immune system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mild RSV</th>
<th>Severe RSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• fever</td>
<td>• high fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• runny nose</td>
<td>• extreme breathing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• cough</td>
<td>• coughing, wheezing, grunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• can result in bronchiolitis and pneumonia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Once you have been exposed to RSV it takes about 4 days to get sick.

• Most people will recover from RSV in 8 to 15 days but it may take up to 4 weeks.

• RSV can develop at any time of year but it is more common in the winter months and early spring.

My child is sick. When should I call the doctor?

Call your doctor or Telehealth Ontario if you are concerned or notice that your child:

• feeds or eats poorly  
• has fewer wet diapers in a day  
• has flushed skin or feels hot  
• has difficulty breathing  
• is less active than usual  
• has blue colour of the lips or around the mouth  
• is pale or looks unwell  
• is coughing so much that he/she gags or vomits
How is it spread?

- RSV is spread through coughing and sneezing and close contact with infected persons or contact with contaminated surfaces and objects.
- RSV can live up to 6 hours on a surface.
- You can get RSV more than once since you do not stay completely immune once you have had it.

Is there treatment for it?

- For mild RSV, no specific treatment is needed other than the treatment of symptoms. For example, acetaminophen can be given to reduce a fever. Do not give ASA (aspirin) to children.
- For those with severe RSV a hospital stay may be needed to treat breathing problems.
- There are some treatments that may help those who are at high risk of developing severe RSV.
- Talk with your family doctor to see what treatment is right for you.

What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- Clean hands well and often.
- Do not get too close to people who are coughing or sneezing.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve – not your hand.
- Clean and disinfect shared toys and equipment.
- Try to stay away from crowds and people with colds, if your child has a weak immune system.
- Do not visit family members or visitors in a hospital or health care facility if you have a cold or fever.

For more information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:

http://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html

Stop the spread of germs and infection. Clean your hands.