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# Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Information for Parents

*Respiratory syncytial virus*, or RSV, is a virus that can make your baby sick. There are times of the year when your baby has more chance of being around people with the virus, usually from fall through spring (October through March). RSV can cause a mild cold, but it also can lead to a more serious sickness and a stay in the hospital. Babies born early and children younger than 2 years have the greatest risk for RSV. This is because babies born early, even those who did not need any help breathing while they were in the neonatal intensive care unit, do not have fully formed lungs. Also, their bodies may not be able to fight RSV and other viruses.

## Symptoms of RSV

RSV usually causes a mild cold with a runny nose and fever. However, RSV also can make your baby very sick. Call your baby’s provider right away if your baby has any of these symptoms:

* cough that does not go away, gets worse, or produces yellow, green, or gray mucus
* wheezing (a high-pitched whistling sound when breathing)
* trouble breathing or breathing faster than usual
* blue color on the lips or around the mouth
* high fever
* thick nasal discharge that is yellow, green, or gray.

There are ways to protect your baby. RSV is very easy to spread through coughing and sneezing. The virus can live on countertops, doorknobs, hands, and clothing for up to 7 hours. During RSV season, wash your hands well and avoid crowded places (likes malls and churches) and school-age children. Speak with your baby’s provider about your day care plans. You might have to tell other people what RSV is and how dangerous it can be for your baby. Your baby’s provider can help with this by giving you some handouts to help you discuss RSV with friends and family.

Handwashing and keeping your baby away from sick people is a good way to protect your baby. There also is a medication that can help lower your baby’s risk of getting an infection. Synagis (palivizumab) is an immunoglobulin injection that helps prevent RSV. Synagis is not a vaccine, but it helps prevent hospitalization due to RSV. It is indicated for preterm infants (less than or equal to 35 weeks gestational age), children with bronchopulmonary dysplasia, and children with certain forms of congenital heart disease.

More resources can be found here: [www.nationalperinatal.org/rsv\_awareness](http://www.nationalperinatal.org/rsv_awareness) [www.infanthealth.org/rsv](http://www.infanthealth.org/rsv) [www.littlelungs.com](http://www.littlelungs.com/)

