



Programs for Parents, Inc.
Comprehensive Services for Families & Children

YOUR MONTHLY HEALTH TIP FROM PFP

The Common Cold & Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Respiratory syncytial virus is a virus that causes the common cold and other respiratory symptoms. RSV occurs most commonly in the winter and early spring. Studies show that almost all children are infected at least once by their 2nd birthday and most people are reinfected during the course of their lifetime.

Some signs and symptoms of RSV may include:

- Cold-like symptoms (runny nose, cough, headache, sneezing, watery eyes, scratchy throat)
- Irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Tiredness
- Coughing until the lips turn blue

Respiratory symptoms may include:

- **Bronchiolitis**, which is caused by wheezing from narrowed airways in the lung
- **Pneumonia**

RSV is spread by close contact with mouth or nose secretions. The virus that causes RSV can live on surfaces for **many hours and 30 minutes** or more on the skin.

Prevention of the spread of the RSV virus includes:

- Hand washing
- Prevent contact with respiratory secretions by teaching children to sneeze into a tissue or their elbow or shoulder
- Dispose of used facial tissue that contain nasal secretions after each use
- Sanitize surfaces such as tables and chairs frequently

Children who have been diagnosed with RSV do **not need to be excluded** from the group setting unless:

- The child can not participate in group activities
- The child has a fever (101.5° by mouth or 100.5° under the arm)
- The child has rapid or difficult breathing

The **contagious period** for RSV is 3 to 8 days and the **incubation period**, or the time between being infected by the virus and having symptoms is 2 to 8 days. This means that it is possible to contract the virus from a person who is not showing signs or symptoms of RSV.

It is important to report the infection to staff members in the child care setting so they can observe the infected child for symptoms and help decrease exposure to the other children in the classroom by using infection control measures.

**Please call the New Jersey Warmline
at Programs for Parents
at 1-800-713-9006 with any questions**

