



TO YOUR HEALTH

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM OTHER VIRUSES & INFECTIONS



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

Wearing masks, distancing, and reducing our overall social contact with others has reduced how often we get sick from various infections and viruses. However, even with many of the COVID-19 measures still in place, there seems to be an uptick in the amount of people getting sick from infections like respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV.

RSV is usually more common in the fall, winter, and spring, but these infections surged over the summer. This is likely due to removing many of the COVID-19 precautions over the summer, like masking and social distancing.

WHAT IS RSV?

Almost everyone catches RSV before the age of 2. It's one of the most common causes of illness in children. But unlike many other viruses that infect the lungs, you can catch RSV repeatedly. RSV infects the cells that line your lungs and breathing passages. Many symptoms mimic the common cold, like a runny nose, loss of appetite, and coughing or wheezing.

Symptoms usually stay mild in older children and adults. But some people are at risk of more serious disease. These include infants, older adults, and people with a weakened immune system. Some people develop pneumonia or inflammation in the lungs from RSV. Watch for symptoms that get worse over time or trouble breathing or drinking fluids. People with these symptoms should see a health care provider right away. A blood test can show if you have RSV or another virus with similar symptoms.

For mild cases, over-the-counter fever or pain relievers may help reduce symptoms. Most people who get mild RSV feel better in a week or two. But people with more serious cases may need treatment in a hospital.

RSV spreads easily between people. It can travel in droplets from a cough or sneeze. It can also stay on surfaces like doorknobs and tables. That means you can catch it if you touch an infected surface and then touch your face. And people can still spread it even after they stop showing symptoms.

Researchers continue to work on an RSV vaccine. Recently, scientists have been able to take detailed pictures of proteins on the virus's outer surface. Researchers hope that a vaccine will soon be available for at-risk groups. Such a shot may also be able to protect newborns by vaccinating their mothers before birth.

An RSV vaccine could also do much more than prevent infection. Kids who get severe RSV as infants have a higher risk of other lung problems, like asthma. So, a vaccine might prevent some cases of future lung issues as well.

Until there's a vaccine, good hygiene is the best way to avoid getting RSV and other viruses.

PROTECT YOURSELF & OTHERS FROM DISEASE:

These tips can help protect you from getting sick and from spreading sickness to others.

- » Avoid close contact with people who have cold-like symptoms.
- » Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand gel if you're unable to wash them. Be sure it contains at least 60% alcohol.
- » Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched, like doorknobs, toys, and mobile devices.
- » Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- » Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or upper shirt sleeve, not your hands.
- » Stay home when you're sick.

