

CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

What is RSV?

RSV is a viral disease that primarily affects children, but can occur in people of all ages. In babies, young children, and people with weakened immune systems, RSV causes lower respiratory symptoms and pneumonia. In older children and healthy adults, RSV resembles the common cold. Most people have been infected with RSV by age two. Reinfection is common throughout life.

How is RSV Spread?

RSV is spread through direct contact with oral secretions such as by breathing them in after an infected person coughs or sneezes. RSV is also spread by touching a surface that has the virus on it, like a doorknob, and then touching your face before washing your hands. The virus can live on hands for 30 minutes or more and on environmental surfaces for several hours.

What is the Incubation Period for RSV?

The incubation period, or the time from exposure to the onset of symptoms, can be 2-8 days, but illness typically occurs in 4-6 days.

How Long is a Person Infected with RSV Contagious?

The virus is usually found in respiratory secretions for 3-8 days, although some infants can spread RSV for as long as 3-4 weeks.

How Can RSV be Prevented?

The most effective preventive measure against the spread of RSV infections is careful and frequent handwashing. In addition, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and avoid sharing cups and eating utensils with others.

What Should Childcare Centers Do if a Child is Diagnosed with RSV?

RSV can spread rapidly through schools and childcare centers. The most likely and common mode of transmission is by direct or indirect contact with nasal or oral secretions from infected persons. Children should not attend a childcare center until fever is gone without the aid of fever-reducing medication and the child is well enough to participate in routine activities. In addition, all children and staff members should be reminded of the importance of thorough hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes. Frequently cleaning contaminated environmental surfaces, such as tables, doorknobs, crib rails, toys, etc., may also help stop the spread of RSV.

If your school or childcare center is experiencing an outbreak of RSV, please contact us at 216.201.2080.

For more information about RSV, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov