

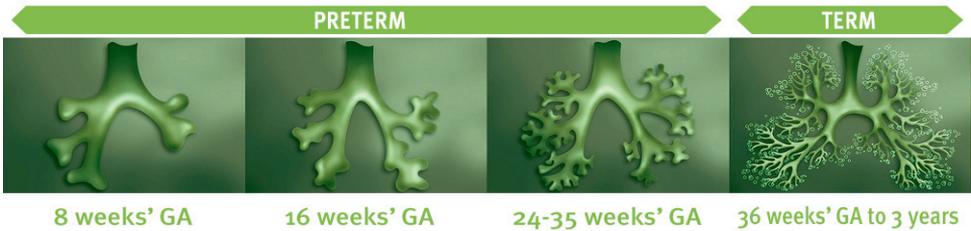
RSV

Respiratory Syncytial Virus

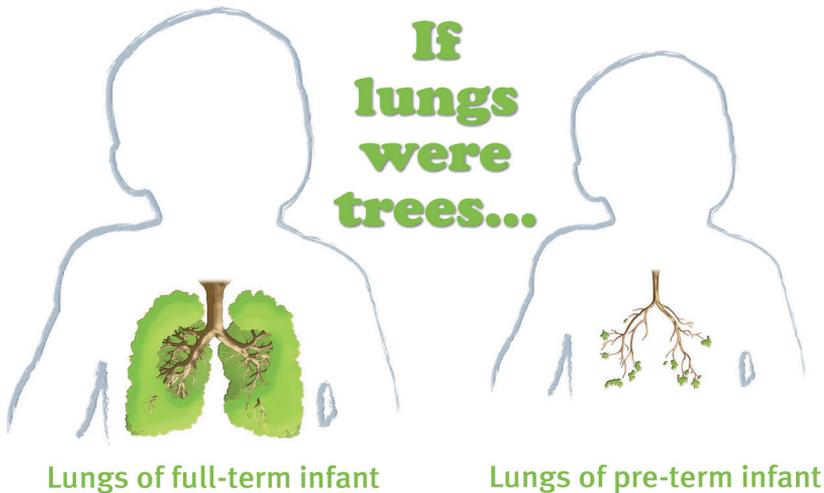


RSV is a very common virus that leads to mild, cold-like symptoms in adults and older healthy children and is the most common cause of lung and airway infections in infants, young children, and premature infants. Outbreaks of RSV infections most often begin in the autumn and run into the spring.

Stages of Lung Development



Adapted from Moore and Persaud 2003, and Dr. Alan Cohen, MD, FAAP, FCCP, Pediatric Pulmonologist.



RSV - Causes

This airborne virus can be transmitted if:

- A person with the virus sneezes, coughs, or blows their nose near you
- You touch, kiss, or shake hands with someone who is infected by the virus
- You touch your nose, eyes, or mouth after you have touched something contaminated by the virus, such as a toy or doorknob

The virus spreads rapidly and can live for a half an hour or more on hands, up to 5 hours on countertops and for several hours on used tissues.

RSV - Risk Factors

The following increase the risk for RSV:

- Attending crèches, play groups and Mother & Toddler groups
- Exposure to tobacco smoke
- Having school-aged brothers or sisters

RSV - Symptoms

Symptoms vary and differ with age and usually appear 4-6 days after initial contact with the virus. In general, RSV symptoms include:

- Bluish skin colour due to a lack of oxygen
- Breathing difficulty or laboured breathing
- Cough ● Croupy cough (often described as a "seal bark" cough)
- Fever ● Nasal flaring ● Rapid breathing
- Shortness of breath ● Stuffy nose
- Wheezing

Signs and tests

Hospitals can rapidly test for RSV using a sample of fluid taken from the nose with a swab.

Treatment

Antibiotics do not treat RSV. Mild infections will clear up without treatment. Infants and children with a severe RSV infection may be admitted to hospital. Treatment includes:

- Oxygen ● Moist (humidified) air
- Fluids through a vein (by IV)
- A breathing machine (ventilator) may be needed.



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Prognosis

Rarely, RSV infection can cause death in infants. More severe RSV disease may occur in the following infants:

- Premature infants ● Infants with compromised immune systems
- Infants with chronic lung disease ● Infants with certain forms of heart disease

Complications

In young children, RSV can cause:

- Bronchiolitis ● Croup ● Ear infections ● Lung failure ● Pneumonia

Children who have had RSV bronchiolitis may be more likely to develop asthma.

Calling your doctor

Contact your doctor or emergency room if breathing difficulties or other symptoms of this disorder appear. Any breathing difficulties in an infant should be considered a medical emergency and you should seek medical attention right away.

Prevention

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap before touching your baby.
- Insist that others wash their hands with warm water and soap before touching your baby.
- People with a cold or fever should not have contact with the baby.
- Kissing the baby can spread RSV infection.
- Keep young children away from your baby. RSV is very common among young children and easily spreads from child to child.
- Do not smoke inside your house, car, or anywhere near your baby. Exposure to tobacco smoke increases the risk of RSV illness.
- Avoid crowded areas such as shopping centres and public transport.

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