

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infection is a major cause of lower respiratory illness among infants, young children, and older adults. RSV causes respiratory tract infections and is the **most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia** (infection of the respiratory tract or lungs) **among infants and young children in Canada**, developing in approximately **20-30% of infected infants**. RSV infects almost all infants by **2 years of age**.

What are the symptoms of RSV in infants and young children?

Children with RSV often present with the same symptoms as a common cold, such as:

- cough
- decrease in appetite and energy
- runny nose
- irritability
- fever

Infants with RSV can develop bronchiolitis that causes wheezing and difficulty breathing which can be severe leading to hospitalization and even death.



Who is at highest risk for RSV?

Severe RSV infection and complications can affect children and adults of any age. However, those most at risk include babies born early (i.e., preterm babies), infants with a weakened immune system, and infants with certain conditions like lung or heart disease. In general, RSV tends to affect children who are 2 years of age and younger the most severely.

What is currently available to protect children against RSV?

RSV is one of the leading causes of hospitalization in infants and young children in Canada. Health Canada has approved the use of **Nirsevimab (a monoclonal antibody) for the prevention of RSV in newborns and infants during their first RSV season, and children up to 24 months of age who are vulnerable to severe RSV disease complications**, through their second RSV season.

Health Canada has also authorized the use of **Abrysvo, a maternal RSV vaccine, for pregnant individuals from 32 through 36 weeks gestation** for the prevention of infant lower respiratory tract disease caused by RSV. With maternal vaccines, maternal antibodies transfer to the infant to protect them against disease.



Vaccination remains one of the best ways to safeguard yourself from preventable diseases, reduce the risk of serious illness and complications and prevent the spread of disease to others. Talk to your healthcare provider to learn more about how vaccination can support you and your families health and wellness.