

NSW Health

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

Protecting yourself and others from the virus

Easy Read version



How to use this guide



NSW Health wrote this guide.

When you read the word 'we', it means NSW Health.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

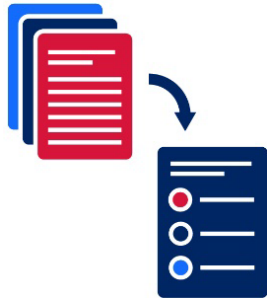
Not bold

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page [21](#).



This is an Easy Read summary of another guide.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the guide on our website.

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/
Pages/respiratory-syncytial-virus.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/respiratory-syncytial-virus.aspx)



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person might be able to help you.

What's in this guide?

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What is respiratory syncytial virus?



Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a virus.

It can affect the parts of your body that help you breathe.

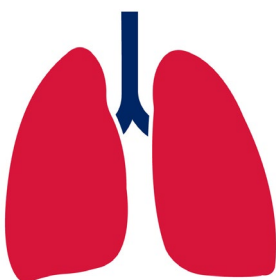
For example, your:



- nose



- throat



- lungs.



More people get RSV in autumn and winter.

What are the symptoms of RSV?



Symptoms are signs that you might be sick.

When you catch RSV, you might have:



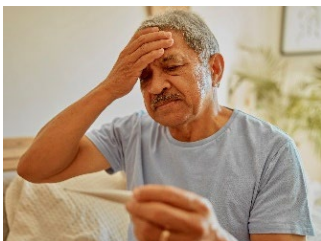
- a runny nose



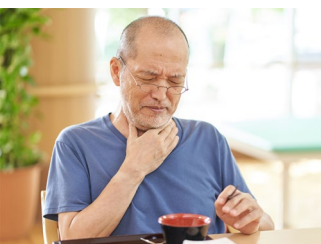
- a cough



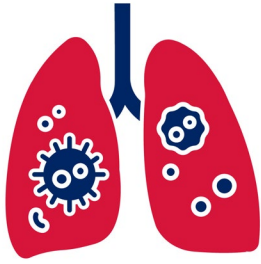
- a wheeze



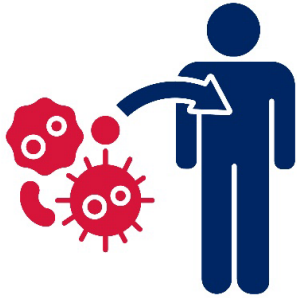
- a fever



- trouble breathing.



RSV can lead to other health problems, like an **infection** in your lungs.



When you have an infection, it means germs have gotten into your body.

This can make you very sick.

Babies less than 12 months old with RSV might also:



- get a chest infection



- have noisy breathing



- find it hard to breathe



- find it hard to eat and drink as usual.

How does RSV spread?



RSV spreads very easily.

People with RSV spread the virus when they:



- sneeze



- cough.



You can also get RSV if you touch something that someone with RSV has sneezed or coughed on.

For example, a phone or a toy.

Who is most at risk from RSV?



RSV mostly affects children.



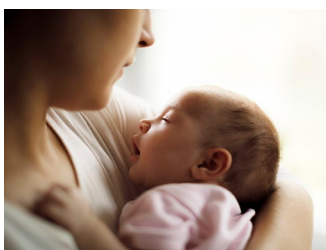
But it can also make adults sick.



Most of the time, people who get RSV are okay.



But sometimes children and adults need to go to hospital to get better.



RSV can be worse for babies under 12 months old.

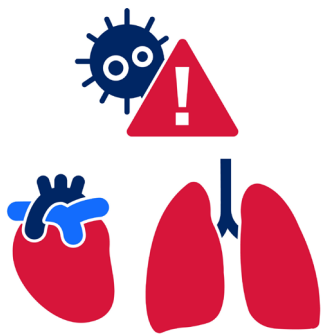
RSV can also be worse for children under 2 years old who:



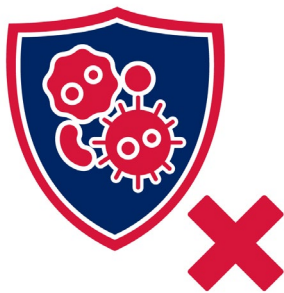
- were born early



- had a low weight when they were born



- have other illnesses, like heart or lung diseases.



- don't have a good **immune system**.

Your immune system is how your body protects you from germs and keeps you healthy.



RSV can also be worse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under 2 years old.

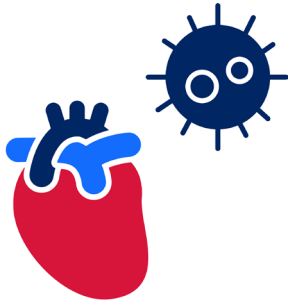


RSV can make a child's **asthma** worse.

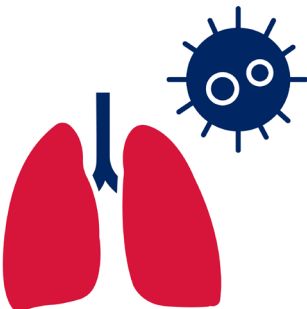


Asthma is an illness that can make it hard to breathe.

RSV can also be worse for older adults:



- with heart diseases



- with lung diseases



- who don't have a good immune system.

How can I protect my baby from RSV?

What is a vaccine?



A **vaccine** can start protecting your baby before they are born.



A vaccine is a medicine that:

- helps your body get ready to fight an infection
- can stop you getting very sick.

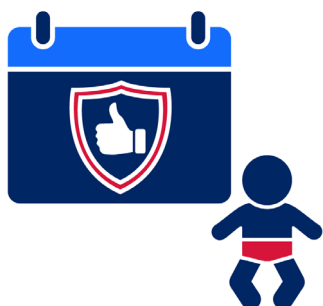


The RSV vaccine takes about 2 weeks to start protecting you and your baby.



You can get the RSV vaccine if you are between 28 and 36 weeks pregnant.

Having the RSV vaccine while you are pregnant can:

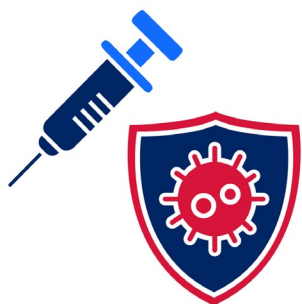


- protect your baby until they are 6 months old



- stop your baby getting very sick from RSV.

What is an immunisation?



An **immunisation** is a medicine that helps protect you from an infection.

Immunisations start to protect you straight away.

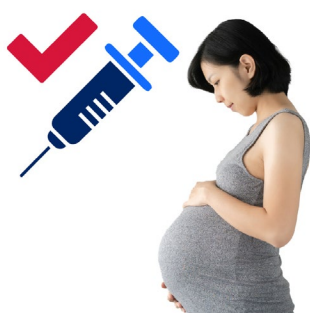


The RSV immunisation is for babies whose mothers did not have the vaccine when they were pregnant.

They can have the immunisation when they are born.



Babies that are at high risk of getting very sick from RSV should get the immunisation.



They should also do this if their mother had the RSV vaccine when they were pregnant.



You can ask your doctor what is best for:

- you
- your baby.

How do I protect myself if I am 60 or older?



There is an RSV vaccine for people who are aged 60 and over.



You will have to pay for this vaccine.



You can talk to a doctor about the vaccine.

They can help you decide if it is right for you.

How can I protect myself and others?

To help keep everyone safe from RSV, you should:



- stay home when you or your child is sick



- wash your hands with soap



- cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough.



If you are sick, you should also stay away from people who are at risk of getting very sick from RSV.

For example:



- babies



- people over 60 years old.



If you are sick, you should wear a mask if you need to leave home.



Children under 12 years old should wear a mask that fits their face.



But children under 2 years old should not wear a mask.

How can you get better from RSV?



Most of the time, you can get better from RSV at home.

You can help yourself or your child get better by:



- resting

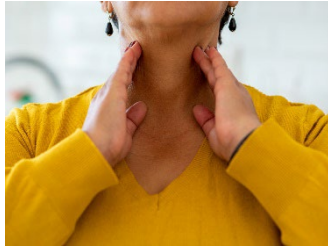


- drinking water.

You can also take:



- paracetamol
- or
- ibuprofen.



These can help if you or your child are in pain.



You should keep taking any other medicine you need too.



You should contact your doctor if you:

- are worried about your symptoms
- are worried about taking other medicine
- need more information about RSV.



You can also call healthdirect.

Healthdirect is a 24-hour helpline.

1800 022 222

When should you call Triple Zero (000)?

You should call Triple Zero (000) straight away if your child:



- finds it hard to breathe
- grunts while breathing
- is sick from not drinking enough
- has blue lips or skin.



You can call Triple Zero and ask for an ambulance.

000

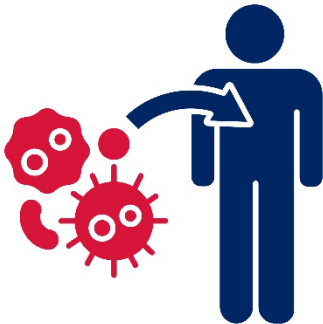
Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Asthma

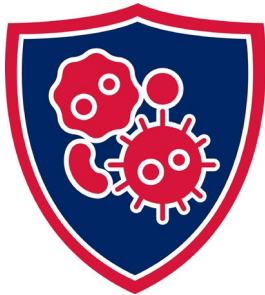
Asthma is an illness that can make it hard to breathe.



Infection

When you have an infection, it means germs have gotten into your body.

This can make you very sick.



Immune system

Your immune system is how your body protects you from germs and keeps you healthy.



Immunisation

An immunisation is medicine that helps to protect you from an infection.

Immunisations start to protect you straight away.



Symptoms

Symptoms are signs that you might be sick.

Vaccine

A vaccine is medicine that:



- helps your body get ready to fight an infection
- can stop you getting very sick.

Vaccines take about 2 weeks to start protecting you.



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