

RSV hospitalises thousands of Australian babies each year – **more than any other virus.**



Two-month-old Baby Hazel was hospitalised with RSV and spent eight days in an induced coma.

Learn more about respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and join the **#RSVandMe** conversation.



RSV and Me – Know the Facts

RSV can be devastating. Every year, thousands of Australian infants are hospitalised with RSV-related illness, with many requiring intensive care.

What is RSV?

RSV is an unpredictable and potentially very serious virus that causes seasonal outbreaks, usually during the winter months.

RSV can be mild, with cold-like symptoms, but can sometimes lead to more severe illness, including lung infections such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia.

How is RSV transmitted?

RSV is highly contagious and spreads easily between people through coughs and sneezes.

Who can contract RSV?

Almost all children will be infected with RSV before the age of two, however babies under the age of six months are more likely to develop severe symptoms.

It is often difficult to predict which infants will develop severe RSV and require urgent medical care. Most hospitalisations occur in otherwise healthy, full-term newborns.

Some children have a higher risk of severe disease, including babies who are born pre-term, have chronic lung or congenital heart disease, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

What's the impact of RSV in Australian children?

RSV is a leading cause of hospitalisation in young children. On average, the virus is responsible for almost 12,000 annual admissions to hospital by Australian children under 12 months of age.

Babies and infants with severe RSV may be admitted to ICU for additional oxygen, tube feeding, intravenous fluids and ventilation.

Severe RSV in infancy is linked to increased risk of recurrent wheezing and asthma, allergies, decreased lung function, and other long-term health issues.

How can RSV be prevented?

You can help prevent the spread of RSV in infants through good hygiene practices, including disinfecting shared toys, washing hands thoroughly before touching an infant, and keeping a distance from people with cold-like symptoms.

When to seek medical care

In infants, the symptoms of RSV are similar to many other respiratory viruses and include a runny nose, coughing, sneezing, wheezing, loss of appetite, lethargy and irritability.

RSV can cause bronchiolitis or pneumonia so medical care is important for infants who display symptoms of severe RSV, including a high fever, shortness of breath and a greater effort required to breathe.

Signs that a baby may have bronchiolitis or pneumonia include:

- **Rapid breathing (more than 40 breaths per minute)**
- **Laboured breathing – tugging under and between the ribs and/or lower neck**
- **Up and down head movements and/or grunting while breathing**
- **Flared nostrils**
- **Wheezing**
- **Blue tint or changes to skin colour around the mouth and eyes**

RSV is too serious and unpredictable to delay medical care. Babies and young children can deteriorate very quickly.

If you suspect severe RSV or an associated lung infection, see a healthcare professional urgently.

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