

### **What is RSV?**

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a virus that can cause infection of the upper and lower respiratory tracts in people of all ages. The infection can be minor, producing cold-like symptoms or major illness such as pneumonia or bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small air passages in the lungs). RSV commonly occurs in Iowa from December to April.

### **Who gets RSV?**

Babies (especially those born early), people with immune system problems, people with heart or lung problems, and older adults have a higher risk of getting severe disease with RSV infection. RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia among infants under one year of age. Severe lower lung disease is more likely among the elderly and those with heart or lung disease and weakened immune systems.

### **What are the symptoms of RSV?**

RSV infections cause symptoms like those of the common cold: a stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, wheezing and coughing, a low fever, and earache. Babies may have additional symptoms that include lack of appetite, disrupted sleep, little interest in things going on around them, and being fussy. Rarely, some babies may also have apnea, a condition in which breathing stops for about 15 to 20 seconds.

### **Are there medicines I can take if I get sick with RSV?**

For children with mild disease, no specific treatment is necessary other than symptom relief. Children with severe disease may require oxygen therapy and sometimes mechanical ventilation. Your doctor may give additional medications.

### **How is RSV spread?**

Infection spreads from persons to person through close contact with infected persons or contaminated surfaces or objects. The virus is most often spread by getting droplets containing the virus on your hands and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

### **How long is an infected person able to spread RSV?**

Infected persons can usually spread the virus for 3-8 days; however, in young infants, the period for spread may be as long as 3-4 weeks.

### **What should I do to protect myself and my family from RSV?**

- ✓ **Wash your hands often** during the day. If you cannot wash your hands, alcohol-based hand cleaner may be used if your hands do not look dirty.
- ✓ **Stay away from others you know are ill.** You are less likely to become ill if you stay at least three feet from someone who is coughing or sneezing.
- ✓ **Do not** share items such as cups, glasses and eating utensils
- ✓ **Throw tissues away** right after they are used
- ✓ **Clean and disinfect** toys shared by multiple children

### **Can I get RSV more than once?**

Yes, infection can occur repeatedly throughout life, sometimes even during the same season.

### **Is there a vaccine for RSV?**

Currently no vaccine is available. Research is underway to develop a vaccine.