



# **RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS** **INFECTION (RSV)**

RSV is an infection of the small air passages of the lung causing bronchiolitis and pneumonia. RSV is most common in children under 1 year of age but it can affect anyone at any age. Most children have been infected with RSV by the time they turn 2 years of age, but only a few will develop serious illness. Re-infection can occur throughout life.

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

Small infants may have irritability, decreased activity and breathing difficulties as early symptoms. Older children may have symptoms similar to any other respiratory infection, such as cough, sneezing, fever, runny nose and decrease in appetite.

## **How is RSV spread?**

RSV is spread when the infected person sneezes or coughs the droplets into the air. The person who is at risk then inhales the virus from the air. The infection can be spread by direct contact with nasal or oral secretions from the infected person. Activities such as kissing the face of a child or coming into contact with surfaces that have been infected with secretions and then rubbing the eyes or nose can spread RSV. RSV is common in winter and early spring.

## **What is the incubation period for RSV?**

The incubation period can range from 2 - 8 days but is usually 4 - 6 days.

## **How can RSV be prevented?**

Steps can be taken to limit exposure and to help stop the spread of RSV infection:

- Cover coughs and sneezes,
- Wash hands frequently and correctly,

- Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils with others,
- Refrain from kissing others,
- Cleaning contaminated surfaces frequently (i.e., door knobs, toys, etc.)

## **Should the child with RSV be excluded?**

Children with fever and respiratory symptoms should be excluded from childcare until they no longer have a fever. Children with respiratory symptoms should be kept separated from children with high-risk conditions.

## **Is RSV Reportable?**

No. RSV is not reportable by New Hampshire state law to the Division of Public Health Services, Communicable Disease Control Section. However, Public Health Professionals are available for consultation at (603) 271-4496 or 800-852-3345 ext. 4496.