

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Respiratory Viruses

## What is a respiratory virus?

There are many different germs called respiratory viruses. Some names you might hear are RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus), parainfluenza, influenza, adenovirus, coronavirus, and rhinovirus.

In most children, respiratory viruses look like the common cold. They can cause a cough and a stuffy, runny nose. In some children, a respiratory virus may cause a fever.



**In most children, respiratory viruses look like the common cold.**

## When do you see respiratory viruses?

Children usually get sick with respiratory viruses between November and March. Most respiratory viruses are seen between December and February.

## Is getting a respiratory virus worse than getting a cold?

Most of the time, having a respiratory virus is like having a cold that lasts for one to two weeks.

Sometimes, infants and children with a respiratory virus get so sick they need to be in the hospital. Children who get very sick from a respiratory virus may have been born early (**premature babies**), are less than six months old, or have heart or lung problems.

Children with respiratory viruses may need to be in the hospital if they:

- ✓ have a lot of trouble breathing or very fast breathing
- ✓ may have stopped breathing
- ✓ have a very deep cough
- ✓ look very tired or act very tired
- ✓ don't want to eat
- ✓ lips or fingertips look blue.

Respiratory viruses could also cause lung infections like pneumonia, bronchiolitis, or bronchitis.

### **How do I know if my child has a respiratory virus?**

It's hard to tell a respiratory virus from other viral infections without a special test. A test to see what germ your child has is only needed if your child is very sick. This test is called a nasal swab.

### **When should I call the doctor?**

Call your doctor whenever you are worried about your child's health. If your child has trouble breathing, or is breathing very fast, call your doctor. If your child's breathing makes it hard for him or her to eat or sleep, call your doctor. This is especially important if your child is less than six months old, was born early, or has another medical problem. If you're not sure, call your doctor.

### **What is the treatment for a respiratory virus?**

Most of the time, a respiratory virus is treated just like a cold. If your child has a fever or ear infection, call your doctor.

If your child has trouble breathing, a very deep cough, looks very tired, does not want to eat, or acts very tired, call your doctor right away.

Antibiotics do not kill viruses. They do not make a virus infection go away faster.

### **How can I keep my child from getting a respiratory virus?**

People with a respiratory virus can spread it to others around them. Because respiratory viruses are so common in the winter, they are hard to avoid. The best way to keep from spreading a virus is to wash your hands well.

Remember, a respiratory virus can look like a cold in older children and adults. Anyone with a cold should try not to pass it to babies and young children.

A person in your family with a cold should **cover sneezes, throw out used tissues, and wash hands well.** Many illnesses spread by touching things or people, then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Good hand washing stops germs from spreading this way.

If you want to learn more, ask your nurse or doctor for the handout **Good Handwashing, #100.**



**Good hand washing stops germs from spreading.**

## **Visitors**

Most children who are in the hospital don't have respiratory viruses. They have other medical problems. We don't want them to get respiratory viruses, too. Respiratory viruses can be a real problem for children who are sick or who were born too early.

**During respiratory virus season we do not let children who are under 12 years old visit the hospital.** Since a respiratory virus can look like a cold, it is hard to tell who has it. **No one, of any age, should visit the hospital if he or she has a runny, stuffy nose, or cough.** This will help keep sick children from getting a virus, too.

Hospital patients with a respiratory virus will have signs on their doors. The sign will tell you to cover yourself and wear a mask when you go in the room. Gowns and masks will be by the door. (If not, ask a nurse.) Using gowns and masks, and washing your hands after you leave the room will help keep you from getting the virus and spreading it to other people.

## Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor how you know when to call your doctor, if your child has a respiratory virus. (Check when done.)
  
- Tell your nurse or doctor what you can do so you don't spread a respiratory virus. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,

- call your child's doctor or  call \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to know more about child health and illness,  
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
602-546-1400  
[www.phoenixchildrenshospital.com](http://www.phoenixchildrenshospital.com)

### Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

Friday, March 2, 2007 • DRAFT in family review  
#813 • Written by Esther Muñoz, RN • Illustrated by Dennis Swain



Name of Health Care Provider: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: 813  
For office use: Date returned: \_\_\_\_\_  db  nb

## Family Review of Handout

**Health care providers:** Please teach families with this handout.

**Families:** Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  Yes  No

easy to read?  Yes  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  Yes  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading  
this handout?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any  
questions about the subject?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes  No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

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**Thank you for helping us!**