

Fact Sheet:

RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS

- RSV, or Respiratory Syncytial Virus, is the most common cause of lower respiratory infection and viral death in children under 5 years of age and children under the age of 1 are especially vulnerable¹. It is the leading cause of hospitalization in children under the age of one². (References: ¹Thompson WW, Shay DK, Weintraub E, et al. Mortality associated with influenza and respiratory syncytial virus in the United States. *JAMA*, 2003;289(2):179-186. ²Leader S, Kohlhase K. Respiratory syncytial virus coded pediatric hospitalizations, 1997-1999. *Pediatr. Infect. Dis. J.* 2002; 21(7):629-632.)
- Premature babies or infants born up to four weeks early (also referred to as less than 36 weeks gestational age) are at increased risk for severe RSV disease. Since premature birth interrupts the final stages of normal lung development, premature children are more vulnerable to more severe lower respiratory tract infections.
- Certain populations of children, including premature infants, children with chronic lung disease and/or congenital heart disease are at increased risk for complications from serious RSV disease.
- According to the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), RSV outbreaks occur worldwide typically from Fall through Spring. During RSV season in the USA, up to 125,000 children under the age of one year are hospitalized annually due to RSV-related illnesses¹ and some of these children may die.² (References: ¹Shay DK, Holman RC, Newman RD, Liu LL, Stout JW, Anderson LJ. Bronchiolitis-associated hospitalizations among U.S. children, 1980-1996 *JAMA* 1999;282:1440-1446. ² Thompson, Shay, Holman, Roosevelt, J. *Infect. Disease*, 2001;183;16-22.)
- RSV spreads easily from person to person through respiratory tract secretions that carry the virus: sneezing or coughing, hands that touch the nose, mouth, or eyes and then come in contact with another person or object. The RSV virus can survive up to 6 hours on hands and up to 12 hours on non-porous surfaces. Spread within families is common, especially when a school-aged child re-introduces the virus to the family. (Reference: Hall C. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 2000;31:590-6.)
- Despite strict infection control procedures, hospital nursery units, daycare centers, and other similar institutions are at high-risk for RSV outbreaks.
- The symptoms of RSV may be like a cold at first and can include: fever, runny nose, other cold-like symptoms. The symptoms may then get worse, and can include: coughing, difficulty breathing, wheezing (a whistling sound), rapid breathing.