



Kids Health Pānui

Advice for Managing Winter Viruses including RSV

Increase in RSV infection

There is an increase in RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) infection being reported across New Zealand, including in the Bay of Plenty and Lakes areas.

RSV is one of many common viruses that often circulate in the winter months. RSV typically causes mild cold or flu-like symptoms in adults and older children, such as a runny nose, sneezing, dry cough, mild fever, and sore throat.

However, RSV may sometimes cause more severe respiratory illness, most often in young children and babies.

Advice for parents

Most children with RSV and other viral respiratory infections will get better by themselves within a few days and usually won't need to see a doctor. Parents should monitor to check their child is eating and drinking normally or breastfeeding well, does not look sick and doesn't have any trouble breathing. It's important to see a doctor if there are any concerns such as if the child:

- is breathing faster than normal or if breathing is noisy, wheezy or seems to take extra effort
- seems unwell, sluggish, sleepy or lethargic
- is not eating and drinking or breastfeeding properly
- may be becoming dehydrated (e.g. having fewer wet nappies)

Parents should see a doctor or get health advice if in anyway worried about their child. Parents can get free health advice by calling the Healthline number on **0800 611 116**.

A swab test for RSV is usually not required except sometimes when children are hospitalised and require a swab as part of their clinical management. However, a doctor may do a swab to check for other infections like COVID-19 or strep throat. Parents should be sure to tell the doctor if they or their child have been in contact with a person with COVID-19, or have returned from a place where there is COVID-19, or have left managed isolation in the last 14 days. Māori and Pasifika children 3 years or older with flu-like symptoms and a sore throat, need a swab for strep throat.

Advice to Early Learning Services for managing winter viruses including RSV

Children with symptoms should stay home

You should ask that all tamariki and staff showing signs of illness stay home until symptoms have resolved.

Display your early learning service's (ELS) policy on illness for all staff and whānau to see and ensure it is strictly adhered to. The policy helps to ensure that staff and parents have a clear understanding of when children should stay at home.

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is one of the most effective and inexpensive ways of reducing the transmission of viral illnesses such as RSV, influenza and COVID-19. To help keep your ELS safe and healthy, teach tamariki to:

- wash hands thoroughly with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds
- dry hands with a clean, dry towel or paper towel for 20 seconds

Make frequent hand hygiene a rule for everyone especially:

- before eating and cooking
- after using the bathroom
- after touching animals, including family pets
- after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- after being outside

Cough and sneeze etiquette

Encourage children and staff to practice good cough and sneeze etiquette. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or coughing or sneezing into your elbow.

Dispose of tissues in a lined rubbish bin and ensure children wash and dry hands immediately after coughing, sneezing or handling used tissues.

For more information on RSV and how to prevent it visit the following links:

[Kids Health Pānui – June/Hune](#) – Toi Te Ora Public Health

[Preventing RSV \(Respiratory Syncytial Virus\)](#) – CDC

[Influenza-like Illness \(ILI\) factsheet](#) – Auckland Regional Public Health Service

[Response to infectious illnesses](#) – Ministry of Education