

Oakland County Health Division Urges Residents Who Have Cold Symptoms to Limit Interaction with Children at High Risk for Severe RSV Illness

- Children 4-years-old and younger are the largest group of patients visiting emergency rooms.
- Children at high risk for severe RSV disease include premature infants, children younger than 2 years old who have chronic lung or heart conditions, and children with weakened immune systems.
- Seek immediate medical attention if a child or anyone at risk of severe RSV infection has difficulty breathing, a high fever, or a blue color to the skin, particularly on the lips and in the nail beds.

Pontiac, Mich., Nov. 2, 2022 – A sharp increase in respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) cases within the last month is prompting Oakland County Health Division to urge residents to protect themselves against the illness. Children 4-years-old and younger are the largest group of patients visiting emergency rooms in Southeast Michigan for respiratory illnesses such as RSV and other viruses.

“RSV is affecting our youngest, more vulnerable residents,” Oakland County Medical Director Dr. Russell Faust said. “We are concerned about RSV, flu and COVID-19 all being widespread as we move into the winter. Get your COVID and flu vaccines when eligible and wash your hands often.”

Nationally, RSV cases are peaking early, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention surveillance. They normally peak in winter.

RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms, but can be particularly serious for infants and older adults. It is the most common cause of bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lung) and pneumonia (infection of the lungs) in children younger than 1 year old in the United States.

To help prevent the spread of RSV and other viruses, the Health Division recommends the following best practices:

- Get vaccinated/boosted for influenza and COVID-19
- Stay home if sick, even when testing negative for COVID-19
- Wear a mask if sick and being around others is unavoidable
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils with others
- Clean frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs and mobile devices
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, not your hands

Public health and hospital officials urge residents to protect themselves as RSV cases increase

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People with cold-like symptoms should limit interaction with children at high risk for severe RSV disease, including premature infants, children younger than 2 years old who have chronic lung or heart conditions, and children with weakened immune systems. If this is not possible, carefully follow the prevention steps mentioned above.

Signs and symptoms of severe RSV infection in infants include:

- Short, shallow, and rapid breathing
- Struggling to breathe — chest muscles and skin pull inward with each breath
- Cough
- Poor feeding
- Unusual tiredness
- Irritability

Seek immediate medical attention if a child or anyone at risk of severe RSV infection has difficulty breathing, a high fever, or a blue color to the skin, particularly on the lips and in the nail beds.

For more information about RSV, go to the Health Division's website at www.oakgov.com/health or by contacting Nurse on Call at 800-848-5533 or noc@oakgov.com. Nurse on Call is available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. For up-to-date public health information, follow @publichealthOC on Facebook and Twitter.

For media inquiries only please contact Bill Mullan, Oakland County media and communications officer, at 248-858-1048.

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