

Dear NW Regional Early Learning Parents,

Cold weather has arrived, and so have respiratory illnesses. Our region is experiencing high rates of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), influenza viruses, COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses. Because we care about the well-being of you and your children we want to share important information about RSV and warning signs to look for. Also, remember that the same steps taken to prevent COVID-19 are effective at reducing the spread of RSV, influenza and other viral illnesses.

RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms, such as runny nose, coughing and sneezing. Most infections go away on their own in a week or two. Almost all children will have had an RSV infection by their second birthday.

Although cold-like symptoms are more typical of RSV infections, some children can experience severe symptoms requiring immediate care. Parents should call their pediatrician or seek care right away if child has any of the following symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing or increased work of breathing.
- Symptoms of dehydration, or fewer than one wet diaper every eight hours.
- Gray or blue color to tongue, lips or skin.
- Decreased activity and alertness.

Some children with RSV may be at increased risk of developing a bacterial infection, such as an [ear infection](#). Call your pediatrician if your child has:

- Symptoms that worsen or do not start to improve after seven days.
- A fever of 100.4°F or higher if they are younger than 3 months old (12 weeks).
- A fever that rises above 104°F repeatedly for a child of any age.
- Poor sleep or fussiness, chest pain, ear tugging or ear drainage.

RSV is transmitted through respiratory droplets, direct contact and by touching contaminated surfaces. The risk of RSV is reduced by respiratory hygiene (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes), masking, hand hygiene and disinfection of high-touch surfaces.

People experiencing mild RSV symptoms should:

- Stay home from work or school, and avoid indoor and outdoor holiday gatherings and events.
- Manage fever and pain with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers.
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Make sure to talk to your health care provider before giving your child over-the-counter cold medicines. These types of medicines are typically not appropriate for young children.

Parents of children younger than 5, especially newborns to 6-month-olds, are especially advised to take precautions that keep their children safe and help to limit the spread of RSV and influenza in coming weeks. Young children, as well as older adults – people 65 and older – are at higher risk of severe illness from these respiratory viruses, including hospitalization and death.

For more information about RSV, visit the Oregon Health Authority's [RSV page](#). Information about influenza is available at OHA's [Flu Prevention page](#).

Download an informational flyer about RSV in [RSV flyer English](#) [RSV flyer Spanish](#)

Please do not send children to school if they are sick, even with cold-like symptoms. If you receive services at home, let your service provider know if anyone in your home is ill. Consider wearing a mask and putting masks on children (if appropriate) during the next few weeks even if you haven't worn one lately.

## Take These 8 Steps to Keep Your Family Healthy for the Holidays.

- Stay home when you're sick, even with cold-like symptoms. Keep children out of school and day care when they are sick. Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or with a tissue that you can immediately throw away.
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces, including door knobs, faucets, chairs, countertops, electronic devices, toys and tables.
- Regularly wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after coughing or sneezing into a tissue. Help children wash their hands. Remember to wash thoroughly for at least 20 seconds.
- Keep your hands away from your or your child's face.
- Get a flu shot for yourself and everyone in your family and stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations, including new bivalent boosters. There is no vaccine for RSV.
- Consider wearing a mask in crowded indoor spaces and mask children who are able throughout the winter.
- Always wear a mask when you are around children under 2 and especially around children younger than 6 months.