

Keeping kids safe from RSV  
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When kids are in school and loved ones are gathering for the holidays, viruses tend to make the rounds.

One common virus in school-age children is RSV.

## What is RSV?

“RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, is a respiratory illness that can impact anyone of any age around the world,” says Kinnera Are, MD, a pediatrician with OSF HealthCare. “In our population, the most at-risk would be infants and children under 2 years of age.”

## How is RSV spread?

“It’s spread by nasal secretions, coughing, and sneezing respiratory droplets. It does tend to increase around the holiday season,” Dr. Are says, “because we’re around other people and we’re in gatherings with family and friends.”

## How do we protect ourselves from RSV?

“Stay home if you’re not feeling well and you’re spreading respiratory droplets. Make sure to wash your hands regularly and frequently,” Dr. Are adds. “School-age kids tend to be the most hard-hit of all these kids, only because they’re around other children. The biggest way we can protect those kids in the winter is teaching good hand hygiene, making sure we’re teaching them to wash their hands really well.”

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved two RSV vaccines for adults 60 years and older. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) recommends](#) adults in this age range should speak with their medical provider about if the vaccine is right for them.

[Additionally, the FDA also approved two options for infants and toddlers.](#) The CDC has signed off on a monoclonal antibody for all infants up to 8 months old, born during their first RSV season. If your child is at high risk for severe disease or severely immunocompromised, they can receive the antibody between 8 and 19 months.

Lastly, [an RSV vaccine for pregnant women has been approved.](#) Check with your medical provider about availability. The hope would be for the vaccine to provide pregnant women with antibodies they could pass to the fetus and protect newborn babies from birth to 6 months from severe RSV.

## How can kids build immunity against viruses?

Two main ways: Healthy sleeping and healthy eating.

RSV is a virus and tends to just need to run its course. Dr. Are says while there is no prescription medicine to treat RSV, there are multiple over-the-counter solutions that can minimize the symptoms.

“We recommend Tylenol or ibuprofen for fevers and fussiness. Kids can have honey for those with a cough, as long as they’re over 1 year of age. Also make sure to have kids blow their noses and suction out the liquid from their noses if they have congestion or a runny nose,” Dr. Are adds.

## **Who else is at higher risk of RSV?**

“The elderly and pregnant women are at higher risk for having more severe RSV infections,” Dr. Are says. “In children, the other populations that would be more at risk is anyone born premature, babies born during this RSV winter season, and anyone that has breathing problems or heart problems.”

Dr. Are says RSV can last anywhere from a couple days to a few weeks.

[OSF OnCall offers a remote patient monitoring program for infants and toddlers with RSV and other respiratory viruses.](#) The no-cost service connects those at home with medical specialists virtually, providing education and digital prompts to discuss signs/symptoms over a 10-day period.

The OSF OnCall RSV program is available to anyone in Illinois or Michigan. Patients must have a positive RSV test or diagnosis to qualify. To learn more about the program, [click here](#).