

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



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Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS ON THE RISE IN ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

PENSACOLA, FL – The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (DOH-Escambia) advises parents, childcare workers, and healthcare professionals to be vigilant for Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). The incidence of RSV cases in Escambia County, Florida, is already higher than usual for this time of year.

Respiratory syncytial virus is highly contagious and spreads through droplets in coughs or sneezes, or when someone touches a contaminated surface like a countertop or doorknob. RSV can spread rapidly through schools and childcare centers. Babies often get RSV when older kids carry the virus home from school and pass it to them. RSV is a major cause of respiratory illness such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia in infants and young children.

Respiratory syncytial virus is often mistaken for a common cold or the flu. Adults and older children might have only mild symptoms such as a cough, stuffy nose, and low-grade fever. Infants younger than 1 year old may have more severe symptoms and trouble breathing. Most at risk are premature babies and children with diseases that affect the lungs, heart, or immune system. Older adults and anyone with poor immune function are also at greater risk for contracting RSV. In these cases, RSV infection can be more serious and may require hospitalization.

“The best way to prevent the spread of RSV is to wash your hands frequently,” said DOH-Escambia Director, Dr. John Lanza. “Also, avoid coming into contact with infected persons. Those having cold-like or flu-like symptoms should stay home from child care centers, school, or work and, if possible, remain apart from other family members – particularly infants and young children.”

Other prevention measures include:

- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow;
- Avoiding sharing cups and eating utensils;
- Refraining from kissing others, especially those with symptoms;
- Frequently cleaning potentially contaminated surfaces (doorknobs, countertops, tables, toys, etc.) using a bleach solution (1 part bleach and 9 parts water).

Call the doctor if your child has any of these symptoms:

- high fever with ill appearance
- thick nasal discharge
- worsening cough or cough that produces yellow, green, or gray mucus
- signs of dehydration
- trouble breathing

In infants less than six months old, irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties may be the only symptoms of infection. If you observe these symptoms in your infant, please call your child’s pediatrician.

For more information about RSV contact 850-595-6683. Web links to additional information about RSV can be found at EscambiaHealth.com.

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Florida Department of Health

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