

Patient Education Respiratory Syncytial Virus R.S.V.

Dear Parent:

Your child has been admitted to the hospital for a respiratory infection. A common virus in children under 3 years of age is respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). In older children RSV will have symptoms similar to the common cold. RSV occurs more often during the winter months (October to April) and your child can get RSV more than one time.

Symptoms

Symptoms of RSV usually begin like the common cold. The upper respiratory symptoms may include cough, nasal stuffiness/discharge, fever, or headache. The lower respiratory symptoms may include difficulty breathing, wheezing and a deep, frequent cough. Other symptoms are decrease in appetite and decrease in normal activities. **Cigarette smoke will aggravate the symptoms.**

Tests

A cotton swab is inserted into the nostrils to collect nasal secretions from the back of the nose. The laboratory will check the sample before diagnosing RSV.

Treatment/Medications

In order to prevent the spread of the infection, your child will be placed in an isolation room. While in the isolation room, nurses, doctors, and other hospital employees will wear a mask and/or gown and gloves. Anyone coming in contact with the child will be asked to wash their hands frequently. **VISITORS WILL BE LIMITED TO ADULTS.**

Your child may receive oxygen in an oxygen tent placed on the bed or by nasal cannula. Breathing treatments may be given by respiratory therapists with medications which are inhaled into the lungs.

Because RSV is a viral infection, antibiotics are not effective. Antibiotics may be ordered if a bacterial infection, such as pneumonia or ear infection develops. Your child will receive the antibiotic drugs by mouth, by shots, or through a plastic catheter (IV) placed into the vein.

Diet

Your child may have a poor appetite; nausea and vomiting are common. Milk and formula tend to thicken the secretions in the nose and throat which make it harder to breathe and swallow. Frequent, small feedings of clear liquids, such as jello, popsicles, apple juice, Pedialyte, or ½ strength formula will be offered. As your child's appetite improves, the diet will be increased to a normal diet for your child's age.

Discharge Instructions

Give the medications prescribed by your doctor. Be sure to give the antibiotics until they are gone.

Continue to encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids. A cool mist humidifier may be used to increase air moisture. Clean the humidifier daily with bleach water and change the water daily. Refilling the humidifier with distilled water is recommended. An ultrasonic type humidifier is not recommended.

Nasal secretions and sputum should be cleaned away with disposable tissues. Wash your hands after touching/handling your child, dirty tissues, or your child's toys. Wash an infant's hands several times a day. Teach older children to wash their hands. Children with RSV continue to be contagious for 3 to 8 days, being less contagious as the disease progresses. Young infants continue to shed the virus as long as 3 to 4 weeks.

DO NOT SMOKE OR ALLOW SMOKING AROUND THE CHILD!!

Notify the doctor immediately if any of the following occur:

- ⊗ Difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
- ⊗ Signs of dehydration: dry mouth, excessive thirst, little or no urination, no wet diapers in 8 hours, soft spot on top of head is sunken down
- ⊗ Extreme decrease in activity, drowsiness, or lethargy
- ⊗ A cough which worsens or lasts longer than 10 days
- ⊗ A productive cough or nasal discharge which is thick yellow, green, gray or bloody
- ⊗ Skin, lips, or nails which appear gray or blue
- ⊗ Fever greater than 101° F, lasting longer than 48 hours, or doesn't go away after using Tylenol or other medication prescribed by the doctor for fever
- ⊗ Rash that develops anywhere on the skin
- ⊗ Neck glands which become large and tender