

# RSV AND viral wheezing

An average healthy infant and toddler gets more than six respiratory infections per year.! Those in daycare get many more. Although most are “common cold” viruses, **RSV** stands out because it makes many infants and toddlers wheeze. For most infants, this viral wheezing (called *bronchiolitis*) is **not** asthma.

**RSV**, *Respiratory Syncytial Virus*, infects nearly half of infants in their first year and almost all children by age 2 years. It is transmitted by contact with secretions. Infectious droplets can be found on toys and objects recently touched by a child with **RSV**. All people should disinfect hands before and after direct contact with children with RSV, and after contact with objects near the child. **RSV** season is usually from November to April. Infants with **RSV** can develop thick nasal secretions, wheeze, and sometimes have trouble breathing. Adults and older children can be reinfected but usually get “just a cold”.

Saline nosedrops and nasal suctioning can give infants some relief. Infants who wheeze from **RSV** may get some relief from bronchodilator treatments (*albuterol*) but these treatments will not shorten the length of illness. Make sure no-one smokes in the home! Antibiotics are not helpful unless complications develop. Other cough medicines do not help and can be dangerous. A few of the sickest children with **RSV** will be hospitalized for oxygen and monitoring. Most infants just need time and the wheezing will resolve.

There is no vaccine against RSV. Infants who were born premature (less than 29 weeks), have chronic lung disease, or other chronic illness may benefit from monthly injections with antibody to **RSV** known as *Synagis*.

Most children who get **RSV** are not at higher risk for asthma, although those who have an asthmatic tendency will struggle more with **RSV**. A strong family history of asthma in parents or siblings increases the risk of asthma later on, as does the presence of eczema. If your child has several illnesses with wheezing, especially beyond age one, we may add other asthma treatments (budesonide,etc.).

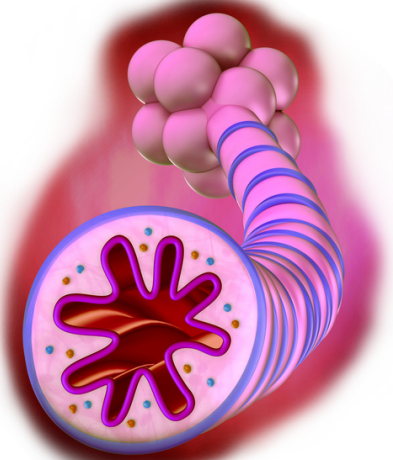
Unfortunately, asthma treatments won't help viral wheezing. Recent reports from the AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) have confirmed this. With good supportive care, most infants recover completely in one to two weeks.

by Gregg Rockower, MD  
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viral bronchiolitis....

## Asthma



The bronchial tubes have inflammation and spasm...

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