Key facts about respiratory syncytial virus

Understanding RSV and keeping it away from your holidays

RSV is a common respiratory virus that causes cold-like symptoms in children and adults.

Severe RSV can be unpredictable and is the leading cause of hospitalization in infants

Adults 65 and over and adults with chronic conditions or weakened immune systems are at high risk for developing severe RSV.

People do not form long-lasting immunity to RSV and can become infected repeatedly over their lifetime.

What causes RSV?

RSV is spread from person to person through close contact with someone who is infected via secretions from coughing and sneezing or touching objects such as toys or doorknobs that have the virus on them.

It takes between two and eight days from the time of exposure for someone to become ill. The illness normally lasts three to seven days, and it is during this time that those infected are most contagious. The peak season for RSV infection in the United States is fall through spring.

Who is at risk for RSV?

Most children contract RSV before age two simply because of contact with other children. Being in crowded places with people who may be infected or having exposure to other children or siblings who may be infected are common ways to pick up the virus.

Those at increased risk of RSV becoming severe or life-threatening are:

-All infants or young children born prematurely, with congenital heart or lung disease, weakened immune systems or have neuromuscular disorders.

-Older adults suffering from lung or heart disease, such as asthma, congestive heart failure, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

-People with immunodeficiency, such as organ transplant recipients, chemotherapy patients or HIV/AIDS patients

What are the symptoms of RSV?

Initial signs of RSV are similar to mild cold symptoms, including congestion, runny nose, fever, cough and sore throat. Very young infants may be irritable, fatigued and have breathing difficulties. Normally these symptoms will clear up in a few days.

A barking or wheezing cough can be one of the first signs of a more serious illness. In these instances, the virus has spread to the lower respiratory tract, causing inflammation of the small airways entering the lungs. This can lead to pneumonia or bronchiolitis.

Infants with severe RSV will have short, shallow and rapid breathing. This can be identified by "caving-in" of the chest in between the ribs and under the ribs (chest wall retractions), "spreading-out" of the nostrils with every breath (nasal flaring), and abnormally fast breathing. In addition, their mouth, lips and fingernails may turn a bluish color due to lack of oxygen.

How RSV is diagnosed?

Because mild RSV symptoms are similar to the common cold, testing usually isn't required to diagnose the infection. However, your doctor may suspect RSV based on your medical history, time of year and a physical exam. In this case, they may want to run lab tests to confirm the diagnosis. The most common is a mouth swab or a blood test to check white blood cell counts and look for viruses.

In severe RSV cases that require hospitalization, additional testing may be needed. Imaging tests, such as a chest X-ray or CT scan can check for lung complications. Blood and urine cultures may be necessary when infants are very sick, as RSV-related bronchiolitis can occur with a urinary tract infection in newborns.

SEE RSV ON A-6

Nifty Tidbits: by Chuck Rigby

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With the recent warmer, dry weather, some plants are coming out of their winter dormant periods. Some people, like me, are beginning to think that it's time to start digging in the dirt to start the new garden season. It seems that digging around in the dirt will make spring come sooner, at least it doesn't slow it down any. This year it would probably be better for the soil if we had more rain and cooler temperatures to put more snow in the mountains.

Soil is an amazing substance. It's made of tiny pieces of rocks called sediments. It also needs to have some water, minerals, and dead organic material. Good soil also contains a great variety of living organisms, most of which can not be seen without a microscope. Bacteria and fungi are very abundant and most useful in helping to decompose dead organisms into useable nutrients which plants can absorb. This process puts vital chemicals back into the living cycle once again. Also assisting with this decay process are nematodes, which are microscopic worms which also can be found as parasites in most living things.

Among the visible living organisms in the soil are grubs, or beetle larvae and earthworms. Earthworms are a reliable indicator of good soil because worms need the same ingredients that flowers, fruits, and vegetables require. Worms need moisture, but not too much or they can't breathe. This is why sidewalks and asphalt become covered with worms after a heavy rain. They are coming to the surface to get more oxygen and many can't find their way back to the soil again. They obtain oxygen directly through their skin, and oxygen dissolved in a little water will pass through the skin directly into their blood system. Carbon dioxide is released in the same manner.

Worms also need dirt that is not too compact or too sandy in order for them to move about freely. Worms are great cultivators which then allows plant roots to extend more easily through the loosened soil. Another requirement of worms is humus or dead organic matter. As with plants, this is their source of nutrients. As they eat their way through the soil, their digestive system extracts the needed chemicals and then the excreted material also fertilizes the soil for plants. Therefore worms and good gardens go together hand in No, they do not have hands or feet either but they do have little bristles that can be extended out through the body wall so that robins have to work for their lunch.

Lumbricus terrestrius is their scientific name, and it comes from "lumbricus" which is Latin for earthworm and "terra" which is Latin for earth or ground. Therefore the name means the earthworm that lives in the ground, a very sensible name I think. They have rather complex body systems and are usually studied in biology classrooms. The circulatory system is composed of arteries, veins, and capillaries, along with multiple tubes called hearts which circulate blood throughout the body. Earthworms are hermaphroditic, which means they have both male and female sex organs in the same individual. The white band, about one third of the body from the head, is called the clitellum and produces a mucous bag which hold the fertilized eggs until they are ready to open.

The lowly earthworm is very vital to maintaining good soil in a garden. They are also a vital source of food for robins, moles and other animals. Studies are being conducted to determine their value in breaking down toxic materials in soil pollution problems. Be kind to worms.

Today in History: The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 21, the 355th day of 2022. There are 10 days left in the year. Winter begins at 4:48 p.m. EST.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 21, 1864, during the Civil War, Union forces led by Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman concluded their "March to the Sea" as they captured Savannah, Georgia.

On this date:

In 1620, Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower went ashore for the first time at present-day Plymouth, Massachusetts.

In 1891, the first basketball game, devised by James Naismith, is believed to have been played at the International YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts. (The final score of this experimental game: 1-0.)

In 1913, the first newspaper crossword puzzle, billed as a "Word-Cross Puzzle," was published in the New York World.

In 1914, the U.S. government began requiring passport applicants to provide photographs of themselves.

In 1945, U.S. Army Gen. George S. Patton, 60, died in Heidelberg, Germany, 12 days after being seriously injured in a car accident.

In 1976, the Liberian-registered tanker Argo Merchant broke apart near Nantucket Island off Massachusetts almost a week after running aground, spilling 7.5 million gallons of oil into the North Atlantic.

In 1988, 270 people were killed when a terrorist bomb exploded aboard a Pam Am Boeing 747 over Lockerbie, Scotland, sending wreckage crashing to the ground.

In 1991, eleven of the 12 former Soviet republics proclaimed the birth of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the death of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In 1995, the city of Bethlehem passed from Israeli to Palestinian control.

In 2009, the Obama administration imposed a 3-hour limit on how long airlines can keep passengers waiting inside planes delayed on the ground.

In 2015, the nation's three-decade-old ban on blood donations from gay and bisexual men was formally lifted, but major restrictions continued to limit who could give blood in the U.S.

In 2020, President-elect Joe Biden received his first dose of the coronavirus vaccine on live television as part of a growing effort to convince the American public the inoculations were safe. The Vatican declared it "morally acceptable" for Roman Catholics to receive COVID-19 vaccines based on research that used fetal tissue from abortions.

Ten years ago: The National Rifle Association said guns and police officers were needed in all American schools to stop the next killer "waiting in the wings," taking a no-retreat stance in the face of growing calls for gun control after the Newtown, Connecticut, shootings that claimed the lives of 26 children and school staff. President Barack Obama nominated Sen. John Kerry as his next secretary of state.

Five years ago: The U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to denounce President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, largely ignoring Trump's threat to cut off aid to any country that went against him. Papa John's announced that founder John Schnatter would step down as CEO; the company had apologized for his comments criticizing the NFL leadership over protests by players who knelt during the national anthem.

One year ago: In an effort to fight the omicron coronavirus variant surging through the country, President Joe Biden announced that the government would provide 500 million free rapid home-testing kits, increase support for hospitals under strain and redouble vaccination and boosting efforts. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot said the nation's third-largest city would start requiring proof of coronavirus vaccination at restaurants, bars, gyms and other indoor venues. Figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau showed that U.S. population growth dipped to its lowest rate since the nation's founding during the first year of the pandemic.

Today's Birthdays: Talk show host Phil Donahue is 87. Actor Jane Fonda is 85. Actor Larry Bryggman is 84. Singer Carla Thomas is 80. Musician Albert Lee is 79. Conductor Michael Tilson Thomas is 78. Actor Josh Mostel is 76. Actor Samuel L. Jackson is 74. Rock singer Nick Gilder is 72. Movie producer Jeffrey Katzenberg is 72. Actor Dennis Boutsikaris is 70. International Tennis Hall of Famer Chris Evert is 68. Actor Jane Kaczmarek is 67. Country singer Lee Roy Parnell is 66. Former child actor Lisa Gerritsen is 65. Actor-comedian Ray Romano is 65. Former Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is 60. Country singer Christy Forester (The Forester Sisters) is 60. Rock musician Murph (The Lemonheads; Dinosaur Jr.) is 58. Actor-comedian Andy Dick is 57. Rock musician Gabrielle Glaser is 57. Actor Michelle Hurd is 56. Actor Kiefer Sutherland is 56. Actor Karri Turner is 56. Actor Khrystyne Haje is 54. Country singer Brad Warren (The Warren Brothers) is 54. Actor Julie Delpy is 53. Contemporary Christian singer Natalie Grant is 51. Actor Glenn Fitzgerald is 51. Singer-musician Brett Scallions is 51. World Golf Hall of Famer Karrie Webb is 48. Rock singer Lukas Rossi (Rock Star Supernova) is 46. French President Emmanuel Macron is 45. Actor Rutina Wesley is 44. Rock musician Anna Bulbrook (Airborne Toxic Event) is 40. Country singer Luke Stricklin is 40. Actor Steven Yeun is 39. Actor Kaitlyn Dever is 26.

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Veterans can stack their 10% discount onto any sales.