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News release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Public health officials advise prevention measures as RSV cases spread**

Public health authorities locally and nationwide are seeing an earlier-than-usual spike in respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) cases, Kenosha County Public Health is advising.

RSV is a major cause of respiratory illness in all age groups, and is the most common cause of bronchitis, croup, ear infections and pneumonia among infants and young children.

Older adults, infants and young children are most likely to get serious complications if they get sick with RSV, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services advises.

While RSV season usually begins in mid-December and peaks in late-January or early February, observed cases are climbing far earlier this year, the department reported last week.

“RSV is by no means unusual, but we are hearing reports of more cases than the norm for this time of the year, and it is too soon to tell how long this trend will continue,” said Kenosha County Health Officer Jen Freiheit. “We encourage people — particularly those who are at most risk for serious illness — to try to take some simple preventative steps to stay healthy.”

### **The symptoms:**

People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within four to six days after getting infected. Symptoms include runny nose, cough, sore throat, fever, decrease in appetite and wheezing.

### **Causes and transmission:**

Respiratory viruses are primarily spread to others by respiratory droplets and aerosols that travel through the air when an infected person breathes, speaks, sings, coughs or sneezes. They can also be spread by contact with the infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

People infected with RSV are usually contagious for three to eight days; however, some infants and people with weakened immune systems can continue to spread the virus even after they stop showing symptoms, for as long as four weeks.

Currently, there are not vaccines available to prevent RSV.

**Prevention:**

- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your face (especially mouth, nose and eyes).
- Cover your mouth or nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Disinfect objects and surfaces regularly (including doorknobs, countertops and light switches).

**More resources:**

Additional information about RSV is available from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/rsv.htm>, and from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>.

Children's Wisconsin also has a series of tips on how to keep your child safe from RSV, at <https://childrenswi.org/newshub/stories/rsv-basics>.

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