



HEALTH ADVISORY

Public Health

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Health officer urges public to take precautions as hospitalizations for pediatric respiratory illness rise



Due to an increase in pediatric hospitalizations and daily emergency room visits for respiratory infections, the County Health Officer strongly encourages San Bernardino County residents to follow preventive measures.

“San Bernardino County is seeing high rates of respiratory illness severely impacting capacity in our pediatric hospitals with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) being a contributing factor,” said County Health Officer Dr. Michael Sequeira. “Respiratory illnesses can severely affect young infants and children, and we are encouraging residents to take precautions.”

Respiratory syncytial virus is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults.

People infected with RSV usually show symptoms within 4 to 6 days after getting infected. Symptoms of RSV infection usually include:

- Runny nose
- Decrease in appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing

These symptoms usually appear in stages and not all at once. In very young infants with RSV, the only symptoms may be irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties.

Seek medical attention immediately if your child is showing warning signs, which may include having trouble breathing, showing signs of dehydration (i.e., no urine in over 8 hours, dark urine, very dry mouth, and no tears), has a persistent or high fever, or looks or acts very sick. Call your primary care provider, pediatrician, urgent care, or hospital to help navigate steps to recommended care before your visit.

There are steps you can take to help prevent the spread of RSV:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before and after eating and using the bathroom.
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing, shaking hands, and sharing cups and eating utensils, with others.

- Clean frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs and mobile devices.
- Do not go to school or work when you are symptomatic.
- Mask when indoors or in large group settings.
- Get your flu shot and COVID-19 vaccines to prevent complications from these viral illnesses.
- Parents and caregivers should keep young children with acute respiratory illnesses out of childcare, even if they have tested negative for COVID-19.

RSV infections occur primarily during the fall and winter cold and flu season, causing bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children under one year of age and placing infants, young children, and older adults, with chronic medical conditions, at risk for more severe disease.

Residents are urged to get a flu shot or COVID-19 vaccine to reduce the number of hospitalizations due to severe illness. To find free flu vaccination clinics throughout the county, visit wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/flu. To get a COVID-19 vaccine, visit sbccovid19.com or call the COVID-19 Hotline at (909) 387-3911.