CAM JOB AIDS

Respiratory syncytial Virus (RSV) 101 for Midwives

WHAT IS RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus is a single-stranded **RNA virus**.

There are two strains, strains A and B, which are both equally severe.

HOW DANGEROUS IS RSV FOR INFANTS?

It is a very common virus and causes the most complications among infants, young children and older adults. Almost all infants are infected by the age of two.



1 in 4

RSV is the leading cause of **bronchiolitis** and **pneumonia** in infants, with 20-30% of infants developing these in the 1st year of life.

RSV TRANSMISSION

RSV is spread **directly** (through droplets when coughing or sneezing) or **indirectly** (when someone touches a contaminated surface).

It has an **average R0 of 4.5**, meaning that one infected person can infect more than four others. RSV is a seasonal disease. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most cases occurred in Canada from November to April, with a peak in January and/or February for infants and children.

RSV RISK FACTORS

Preterm babies who have other health conditions or live in a northern or remote community are at greater risk of severe RSV. But other risk factors for catching RSV include attending daycare, being exposed to 2nd hand smoke or having an older sibling.

80% of babies who are hospitalized are healthy-term newborns.

2% of infants are **hospitalized** due to RSV in Canada in their first year of life, most of them in the first three months of life.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF RSV?

Symptoms usually appear 3-7 days after infection, and last 1-2 weeks. In infants, it can present with **non-respiratory** signs such as fever, tiredness and difficulty feeding. It can also be an **upper respiratory tract infection** (*mild*) with cough, nasal congestion and runny nose. In half of cases, it progresses to a **lower respiratory tract infection** (*severe*) with tachypnea, apnea, wheezing, pneumonia and bronchiolitis.

For more information, visit canadianmidwives.org

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Midwives for everyone, everywhere
Des sages-femmes pour tous, partout

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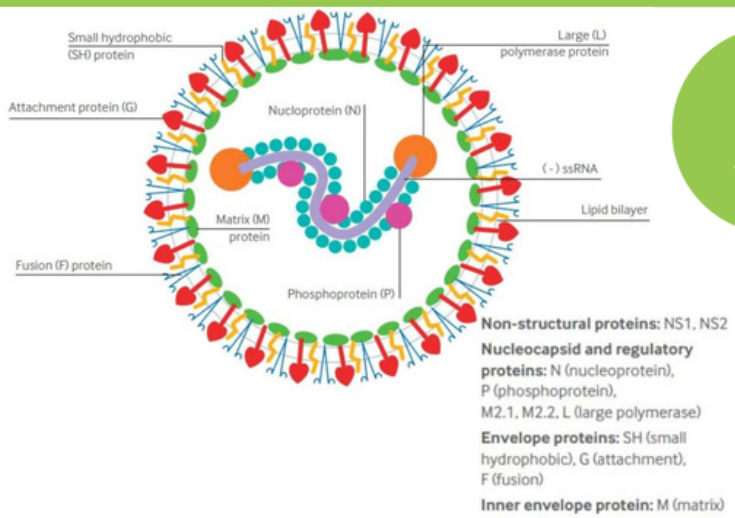
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The RSV virion

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