

**Medication**

Si usted desea esta información en español,  
por favor pídasela a su enfermero o doctor

#1475

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## RSV and Synagis

### What is RSV (respiratory syncytial virus)?

**RSV** or **respiratory syncytial virus**, is a very common virus. In adults and most children, respiratory viruses cause a common cold. A child might have a cough and a stuffy, runny nose. Some infants and children with RSV may become sicker, with a fever, trouble breathing, and poor feeding.

### Is RSV worse than getting a cold?

Most of the time, having RSV is like having a cold that lasts for one to two weeks. Sometimes, infants and children with RSV get so sick they need to be in the hospital. Children who get very sick from RSV may have been born early (**premature babies**), have heart or lung problems, or are less able to fight infections.

Children with RSV may need to be in the hospital if they:

- have a lot of trouble breathing or very fast breathing
- may have stopped breathing
- have a very deep cough
- look very tired or act very tired
- don't want to eat
- have lips or fingertips that look blue.

### How can I keep my child from getting a respiratory virus?

The best way to keep from spreading a virus is to wash your hands well. People with a respiratory virus can spread it to others around them. Because respiratory viruses are so common in the winter, they are hard to avoid. RSV is often in daycare centers, grocery stores, and shopping malls.

Remember, a respiratory virus can look like a cold in older children and adults. Anyone with a cold should try not to pass it to babies and young children.

A person in your family with a cold should cover sneezes, throw out used tissues, and wash hands well. Many illnesses spread by touching things or people, then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Good hand washing stops germs from spreading this way.

If you want to learn more, ask your nurse or doctor for the handout **Good Handwashing**, #100.

It is important to have a smoke-free home. Tobacco smoke makes your baby's lungs more irritated and sensitive.

### **Is there a medicine that could protect my child from RSV?**

Synagis is a drug that can help protect infants and children from RSV. It's also called palivizumab or respiratory syncytial virus monoclonal antibody.

### **How does Synagis work?**

We fight infections by making antibodies against germs. Synagis is an antibody that fights RSV. It is not a vaccine. These antibodies last about one month, so Synagis needs to be given once a month during RSV season.

### **How is Synagis given?**

Synagis is a shot given into a muscle. It may be given in the hospital or in a clinic appointment. It may be given once a month for one to five months, during RSV season.

### **Who should get Synagis?**

Synagis is given to infants at highest risk for severe RSV infection. These are children up to 2 years old who have one or more of these:

- been born early (premature)
- heart disease
- chronic lung disease (CLD)
- airway problems
- trouble fighting infections
- neuromuscular disease.

Your child's doctor will look at these things and decide if your child is at higher risk of having a severe infection, using the guidelines set by the The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/2/415.full>

## **When is Synagis given?**

In Arizona RSV is most common from December to April, but each year can be different. According to the guidelines set by the AAP, an infant at high risk in the hospital should get a dose of Synagis 48 to 72 hours before going home, or soon after leaving the hospital during RSV season.

The antibodies from Synagis help your child for about a month. To stay protected, your child will need a dose every month for the rest of RSV season.

A child in the hospital who has already been started on Synagis will usually receive the next dose as scheduled, if still in the hospital when it is due.

## **Can a child who gets Synagis still get RSV?**

There is a chance a child getting Synagis could still get an RSV infection. However, it is less likely the child will get sick enough to be admitted into the hospital. Even if your child gets this medicine, it is important to protect your child from germs with good hand washing and staying away from people who are sick.

## **Should a child who gets RSV still take this medicine?**

No. Experts now recommend to stop giving Synagis to children who get RSV because there is an extremely low chance a child will get RSV more than once in a season.

## **What are the side effects of Synagis?**

Most infants who receive Synagis experience few or very minor side effects. Side effects may include a mild fever, runny nose, rash, or redness and soreness at the injection site. Severe side effects are very rare.

## **If you want to learn more**

If you want to learn more about RSV season, go to the website of the Arizona Department of Health Services site: [www.azdhs.gov/phs/oids/epi/flu/index.htm](http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/oids/epi/flu/index.htm)

## Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor what RSV is and how it spreads. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor what children are at high risk of getting very sick from RSV. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor why it is important to get Synagis every month during RSV season. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,  
 call your child's doctor or  call \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to know more about child health and illness,  
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
602-933-1400  
866-933-6459  
[www.phoenixchildrens.org](http://www.phoenixchildrens.org)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/theemilycenter](https://www.facebook.com/theemilycenter)  
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### Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

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#1475 • Written by Rhonda Kurz, PharmD • Illustrated by Irene Takamizu

# RSV and Synagis

Name of Health Care Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

For office use: Date returned: \_\_\_\_\_  db

## Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  Yes  No

easy to read?  Yes  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  Yes  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading  
this handout?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any  
questions about the subject?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center  
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Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
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602-933-1395

**Thank you for helping us!**