



Republic of Palau

Ministry of Health

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BELAU NATIONAL HOSPITAL REPORTS CASES OF RSV

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The Ministry of Health would like to inform the public that the Bureau of Public Health is investigating an increase in cases of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), a contagious virus that affects mostly babies and toddlers. People of any age can get RSV, but infections later in life are generally less severe.

KEY POINTS:

- **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a type of cold virus.**
- **Most people experience mild illness and recover in 1-2 weeks, but RSV can cause serious respiratory infections, especially in infants and older adults.**
- **Symptoms are similar to colds, including a cough and runny nose. However, if symptoms worsen, call the Hospital or your doctor for medical advice.**
- **Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene to prevent and protect against the spread of RSV and other respiratory diseases.**

Symptoms of RSV usually include:

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

Symptoms usually appear in stages and not all at once. In very young infants with RSV, symptoms may include irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties. RSV can cause more severe infections in the lungs (such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia).

People at risk for severe illness:

People at greatest risk of severe disease include children under the age of 2, older adults especially those 65 years or older, and people (of any age) who have heart or lung conditions or a weakened immune system.

How RSV Spreads:

RSV is highly contagious, especially while an infected person is showing symptoms. The virus is spread through close contact, when an infected person sneezes or coughs and the virus gets into your body through your eyes,

nose or mouth. RSV is also spread by touching surfaces or objects that the virus has landed on and then touching your face without washing your hands.

Prevention:

There is currently no vaccine or cure available for RSV. The public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene for protection against RSV and other respiratory illnesses:

- **Wash hands frequently** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing** and wash hands thoroughly afterwards.
- **Avoid contact** with sick people; touching eyes, nose and mouth. Stay home if you are sick.
- **Keep things clean**, especially frequently used surfaces and objects (e.g. doorknobs and children's toys) with a virus-killing disinfectant. Do not share cups and eating utensils if you are ill.
- **Avoid crowds and gatherings** if you are prone to illness (young, elderly, weak immune system).
- **Build up your immune system** by maintaining a balanced diet, exercising regularly, getting adequate rest, not smoking and avoiding stress.

If you or your child is experiencing any of the symptoms above, please contact your doctor or the Hospital OPD (488-2555) or the ER (488-2558) for instructions. For emergencies, call 911.