

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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## What are Respiratory Viruses?

Respiratory viruses commonly cause cold and flu-like symptoms. Most individuals who get respiratory viruses recover quickly within a few days. Some respiratory viruses can cause more severe illness and in some cases hospitalization. The best way to prevent respiratory viruses is to wash your hands frequently.

## How are they spread?

Respiratory viruses are spread by ingesting or inhaling air droplets where an infected individual has coughed or sneezed; or by touching a surface contaminated by virus particles.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Fever of 100° F or greater with runny nose, congestion, cough and wheezing. Other symptoms may include: chills, head-ache, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, body aches, tiredness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of appetite and shortness of breath.

## How long does it last?

Symptoms usually begin in one to three days after exposure to the virus and generally last for two to seven days. A person with a respiratory virus is contagious after symptoms start for three to five days in adults and up to several days in young children.

## How can Respiratory viruses be prevented?

Hand washing, covering your cough and sneeze, staying home when sick and not sharing items such as cups, glasses, and utensils are very important in preventing the spread of respiratory viruses. *Surfaces such as; toilets, sinks, floors, tables, water fountains, or any area where a sick individual has been should be cleaned with a 1:10 bleach solution or chemical germicide.*

## What should I do if my child gets a respiratory virus?

- If your child is experiencing respiratory symptoms with shortness of breath, wheezing and high fever, you should take them to their physician for evaluation.
- Keep your child out of school until symptom free for 24—48 hours.
- Ensure that your child drinks plenty of fluids.
- Encourage your child to cough and sneeze into their sleeve, elbow, or tissue, and then wash their hands immediately afterwards.
- Ensure that everyone in your family washes their hands frequently with soap and water for 15—20 seconds each time.

For more information, please contact the SRCHD's Epidemiology Program at 850-983-5200 x105