

ABC's of Children's Health

More Parents Need To Know About RSV

(NAPSA)—Understanding the ABCs of RSV—respiratory syncytial virus—can help parents protect their premature infants from a dangerous, but little understood, disease.

A recent survey, however, found all too many parents don't know enough about RSV disease. According to the survey, most parents cannot identify the symptoms, risks or complications of RSV and they didn't know the season extends from fall through spring. Awareness is lowest among young and low income parents, with 89 percent reporting they had never heard of RSV at all. Even among high-risk groups, awareness was low with less than one quarter of multi-birth parents and parents of preemies reporting that they had heard of RSV disease at all.

RSV is a serious pediatric virus that occurs annually around the cold and flu season. For at risk infants, such as those born prematurely or with chronic lung conditions, this common childhood infection is nothing to sneeze at for babies. The symptoms of RSV are similar to a cold at first, and can include: fever, runny nose, coughing, difficulty breathing, rapid breathing and wheezing.

The disease may progress very quickly, so it is very important to



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take all precautions and to consult a physician at the earliest onset of RSV symptoms. There can be serious consequences to RSV disease in high-risk infants. RSV is highly contagious, spread by physical contact such as touching, kissing, or any close contact with an infected person or object.

RSV is the most common cause of lower respiratory infection in babies. Current data show that in the U.S. up to 125,000 children under the age of one year are hospitalized annually due to RSV-related illnesses. In addition to the serious health consequences, the cost of treating a child hospitalized for RSV-related illnesses can be over \$70,000.

"Many parents are not aware that their babies are at-risk for RSV disease, so education about this disease is extremely important. Parents should talk with their pediatrician about ways to prevent and protect their babies from RSV disease," said Paula Elbirt, M.D., Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at Mount Sinai Medical Center School of Medicine.

The medicine, Synagis (palivizumab) is a medication approved for preventing serious complications from RSV disease in high-risk infants. It's usually given by injection once a month in the doctor's office prior to and throughout the RSV season. The most frequently reported adverse events potentially related to Synagis were fever, nervousness and injection site reaction. Adverse events that occurred in greater than one percent of the Synagis group and for which the incidence was greater than one percent higher than in the placebo group included upper respiratory infection, otitis media, rhinitis, rash, pain, hernia, increase in SGOT and pharyngitis.

To learn more about RSV disease and prevention measures, you can call 1-877-848-8512; see the Premie Care Web site at www.MOSTonline.org or the RSV Web site at www.rsvprotection.com.