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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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## **Respiratory virus (RSV) season hits Alaska**

*Younger children are most at risk*

ANCHORAGE — Alaska's State Public Health Laboratory has reported a recent increase in positive samples of respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV. The lab confirmed that 23 of 44 samples collected from ill children throughout Alaska tested positive for RSV in the first week of January. Eighteen positive cases were reported during the last week of December, 17 of those from the Yukon-Kuskokwim region.

The state Department of Health and Social Services encourages you to help ensure the safety and health of your community, especially for young children and elders, by doing the following:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and hot running water.
- If you don't have soap and water available, use a waterless hand cleaner. (This does not replace hand washing, but will help when soap and water are not available.)
- Avoid sharing cups, glasses and eating utensils.
- When you're sick, avoid kissing children and infants directly on their lips (kiss them on the top of their heads).
- Cough into your sleeve, not into your hands.
- Wash your hands after blowing your nose.
- Wash toys, doorknobs and telephones frequently with a sanitizing solution or wipe.
- If you are sick, stay home. You risk infecting others. Get rest and drink plenty of fluids; especially water and juices.
- If you haven't already, get your influenza and pneumonia vaccines. It's not too late to vaccinate!
- Keep infants and young children at home; avoid large crowds. Children 3 years old and younger are at increased risk for serious complications from RSV, flu, and colds.

Posters and bookmarks may be downloaded from the state's Epidemiology website (see links below.) If you have questions, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites below, or contact your local public health center.

<http://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html> (CDC fact sheets regarding RSV)

[http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/id/dod/rsv/RSV\\_Poster.pdf](http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/id/dod/rsv/RSV_Poster.pdf) (posters)

[http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/id/dod/rsv/RSV\\_RackCard.pdf](http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/id/dod/rsv/RSV_RackCard.pdf) (bookmarks)

<http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/id/dod/rsv/default.htm> (state of Alaska information)

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