



# Bacich Elementary School

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 22, 2022

PH22-164

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## CDPH's Dr. Erica Pan Provides Guidance for Parents About Winter Viruses

### *State Epidemiologist and Pediatrician Shares How to Care for Children at Home and What Symptoms Parents Should Look Out For*

SACRAMENTO – As Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), the [flu](#) and [COVID-19](#) continue to impact Californians earlier than usual this year, state Epidemiologist Dr. Erica Pan urges everyone across the state to protect themselves and their families against many circulating viruses.

“As we prepare for Thanksgiving and holiday gatherings, we need to continue being vigilant in preventing the rapid spread of winter viruses,” said Dr. Erica Pan. “As a pediatrician who specializes in infections, and a parent, it is concerning to see the rise in RSV and flu in babies, young children and our elderly population. It is crucial we are aware of [prevention methods](#), but also, how to care for our loved ones at home, and what symptoms to be aware of for parents to seek care for their children.”

### **CARING FOR YOUR CHILD AT HOME:**

There is no cure for respiratory viruses, but some medications can reduce disease severity in certain situations. For mild symptoms, Dr. Pan provides these tips to help ease discomfort:

- Reduce congestion with nasal saline with gentle suctioning. Patients should sit or lie upright when possible. Cool-mist humidification also helps to clear the congestion and make people feel better.
- Make sure your loved ones get plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids such as water, broth or sports drinks to prevent dehydration. For infants, use electrolyte beverages such as Pedialyte. Healthy snacks and small meals are also recommended.
- If your child has a fever (100 degrees or higher), acetaminophen and ibuprofen can be given to children 6 months of age and older. Infants and children should not be given aspirin as this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome. Only use other medications or medications for infants less than 6 months old under the guidance of your health care provider.
- Follow dosing instructions listed on the back of the medication or from your health care provider.
- Stay home at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

## **WHEN TO SEEK CARE:**

Most childhood respiratory illnesses are mild and resolve on their own without the need for emergency care or hospitalization. Understanding when to see a doctor or go to the hospital ensures that children receive the right care. Call ahead to get medical advice and see what you can do at home and when it is best to come in to be examined. Seek evaluation right away if you child has:

- Symptoms of lung disease: fast breathing, flaring nostrils, head bobbing, grunting, or wheezing while breathing; belly breathing; pauses in breathing
- [Symptoms of dehydration](#)
- Gray or blue color to tongue, lips or skin
- Significantly decreased activity and alertness
- Symptoms that worsen or do not improve after 7 days
- [Fever in those under 3 months of age \(12 weeks\)](#)
- [Fever above 104°F](#) repeatedly for a child of any age
- Poor sleep or fussiness, chest pain, ear tugging or ear drainage

## **IS YOUR CHILD AT A HIGHER RISK FOR SEVERE DISEASE?**

Early evaluation and treatment by a health care professional can ensure the best possible outcomes for children who are at a higher risk of severe disease. Children who are at higher risk of severe disease include:

- Younger children, particularly 6 months old or younger
- Premature or low-birth weight infants
- Children with chronic medical conditions, including chronic lung diseases, heart disease, disorders weakening the immune system, or neuromuscular disorders

## **TESTING FOR RSV:**

Testing for RSV is not always necessary. Unlike COVID-19, testing for RSV generally does not change the way doctors manage individual patients with this illness and treatment is based on the symptoms a person is experiencing. Accordingly, individuals should seek care based on concerns for the symptoms listed above and not solely to obtain an RSV test result. Further, schools and childcare settings should not require a negative RSV test to return to these settings; in most situations, return should also be based on symptoms and generally children with respiratory symptoms should not return to childcare or school until symptoms are resolved or at least mild and improving. This includes waiting until 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

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