

Current major event

Intensifying respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infections surveillance with the start of the influenza season (2022–2023)

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean intensifies monitoring of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infections with the start of the influenza season (2022–2023) in the Region. The regional office is providing technical support and advice to Member States to strengthen RSV surveillance by integrating RSV with influenza and other respiratory viruses of epidemic and pandemic potential within the regional office framework of integrated surveillance.

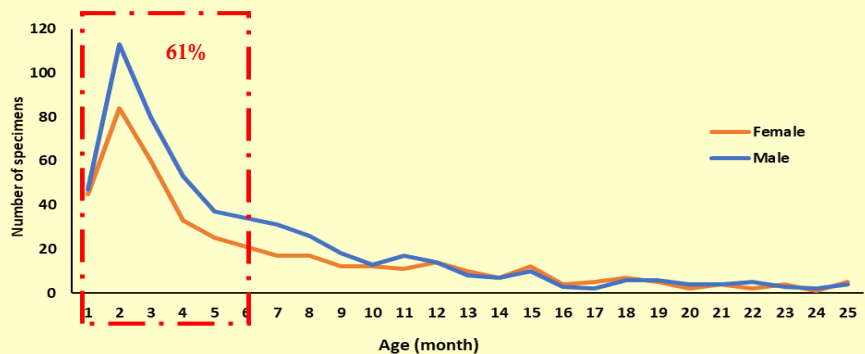
Editorial note

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is the most common cause of acute lower respiratory infection that mainly affects not only very young children but also people of all ages. RSV often causes severe disease and death, particularly in infants younger than two years old and immunocompromised people.

Globally in 2019, there were an estimated 3-6 million RSV-associated acute lower respiratory infection (ALRI) requiring hospital admissions, of which 26 300 were in-hospital deaths and 101 400 RSV-attributable overall deaths in children aged 0–60 months. An estimated 2% of all deaths in children aged 0–60 months and 3-6% of all deaths in children aged 28 days to 6 months were attributable to RSV. Particularly RSV is a concern for resource-poor and fragile countries. In 2019, more than 95% of RSV-associated acute lower respiratory infection episodes and more than 97% of RSV-attributable deaths across all age groups were in low- and middle-income countries.

Six countries from the Region are currently participating in WHO Pilot Project of RSV Surveillance (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan and Qatar). Three of these countries (Egypt, Pakistan and Jordan) are currently sharing RSV data through the global platform FluMart. Based on the available data (from January 2019 to October 2022) from three pilot countries, 2959 samples were tested for RSV, of which 968 were positive (33%). Out of these total positive samples, 35% were RSV type A, 8% were type B, 57% were not typed. Males accounted for 57%

Number of samples tested positive for RSV by age (month) and sex in EMR



Source: WHO EMRO 2022

Key Recommendations:

- The existing surveillance assets, such as the influenza sentinel surveillance, provide a ready-to-use platform for the integrated surveillance of RSV, influenza, COVID-19 and other respiratory pathogens with epidemic and pandemic potential.
- Greater understanding and efforts are needed for all stakeholders to improve the detection of RSV infections, quality data inputs and timely data sharing through the global platform FluMart.

of all positive cases. Six out of 10 (61%) samples tested positive were children aged <6 months (*See graph*).

WHO is currently conducting RSV-specific global interventions aiming to:

- prioritize RSV surveillance in infants less than 2 years of age;
- focus on more severe disease requiring hospitalization;
- broaden virologic monitoring to differentiate virus types and to identify genetic groups; and
- generate a robust understanding of the seasonality, risk groups and disease burden, particularly hospitalization burden in low- and middle-income countries.

The WHO regional office is supporting Member States in laboratory capacity building for improved detection under integrated surveillance of RSV with influenza, COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses and improved sequencing capacities. Furthermore, the regional office is encouraging all RSV pilot countries to timely share RSV surveillance data through the WHO global RSV reporting platform FluMart.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries

Current public health events of concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): 2019-2022

Afghanistan	[201 236 (7811), 3.9%]
Bahrain	[685 269 (1521), 0.2%]
Djibouti	[15 690 (189), 1.2%]
Egypt	[515 397 (24 798), 4.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[7 554 006 (144 516) 1.9%]
Iraq	[2 461 049 (25 358), 1%]
Jordan	[1 746 997 (14 122), 0.8%]
Kuwait	[661 333 (2565), 0.4%]
Lebanon	[1 216 999 (10 688), 0.9%]
Libya	[507 024 (6437), 1.3%]
Morocco	[1 265 201 (16 278), 1.3%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[703 014 (5708), 0.8%]
Oman	[398 689 (4628), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[1 573 319 (30 623), 1.9%]
Qatar	[461 398 (682), 0.1%]
Saudi Arabia	[818 698 (9380) 1.1%]
Somalia	[27 237 (1361), 5%]
Sudan	[63 409 (4963), 7.8%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[57 333 (3163), 5.5%]
Tunisia	[1 146 044 (29 257), 2.6%]
United Arab Emirates	[1 032 522 (2346), 0.2%]
Yemen	[11 939 (2158), 18.1%]

