



## Dear Family and Friends,

We're writing regarding a very important matter: RSV. For those of you who plan to visit us over the next few months, and even if you are not, please take a few minutes to read this letter.

We want to start by saying thank you for the outpouring of support we have received from everyone. So many people have done so much for us, and every bit of help we have received truly is appreciated. We are experiencing the biggest challenge of our lives, and we're lucky to be surrounded by so many family members and friends who have shown us so much love and support.

We'd also like to share an important topic that we recently discussed with our babies' pediatrician. If you are not aware of RSV, respiratory syncytial virus, you are among the majority. Most people have not heard of RSV, even though nearly every child has had the virus by age two. For full-term babies, RSV typically is not any worse than a common cold, but for preemies, the virus can be quite different. Babies born earlier than 36 weeks are at the highest risk for serious complications like pneumonia, bronchiolitis, and other sometimes fatal complications. Our babies were born premature, are multiples, and had low birth weights; these are among the highest risk factors for contracting RSV and developing serious complications. This website offers a great visual comparison of a preemie's lungs compared to the lungs of a full-term baby: <http://www.preemiecare.org/LungsTrees03-4.pdf>

Preventing the spread of RSV is very difficult. Thus, we must be vigilant about keeping our children safe during RSV season (October through April). The virus is spread through physical contact, in the air via a cough or sneeze, or by touching an infected object. The virus can live as long as six hours on hands and up to twelve hours on objects, and it spreads very easily, especially from child to child. Studies have also shown that infants pose an even higher risk of spreading RSV to others.

You may ask, "Can't they fight it off and build up their immune system? Kids need to get sick, right?" The simple answer is NO. Since our babies were pre-term, they did not acquire the necessary immunities to fight off infection. If they contract RSV, they could be hospitalized and develop serious complications.

We'll be asking our visitors to follow a few guidelines to help prevent the babies from contracting RSV or any other illness.

*We ask that all visitors do the following:*

1. When you arrive, please wash your hands and use hand-sanitizer as needed before touching the babies.
2. Please, if it is possible, get a flu shot.
3. Please refrain from coming over if you are currently sick and have not been symptom-free for at least 5 days, if you live with someone who is sick, or have been in close contact with someone who is sick.
4. If you smoke, we ask that you change your clothing and refrain from smoking prior to visiting, as a preemie's lungs are very sensitive to smoke. Most RSV sites recommend against passive smoke exposure.
5. If you are parents to a baby or toddler, please refrain from bringing them to our house during RSV season.

Unfortunately we will not be attending many events during RSV season. Our goal is to make it through this and the next RSV seasons without the babies contracting RSV or any other serious illness. Their lungs are still very fragile until they are 2-years-old.

Please understand that this letter is not meant to offend anyone, just simply to provide an explanation. We hope you understand, and we appreciate your help keeping our babies safe.

We are also providing several resources with additional information about RSV below.

[http://www.preemiecare.org/rsv\\_resourceshtm.htm](http://www.preemiecare.org/rsv_resourceshtm.htm)

<http://www.preemiecare.org/rsvfaq.htm>

<http://www.preemiecare.org/rsv2.htm>

<http://www.mostonline.org/preemieBB/viewforum.php?f=82>

Love and best wishes to all!

The Family of much loved preemies