

# Respiratory viruses

bring us familiar cold symptoms that last a few days to a week for most people, but these same viruses may cause more serious illness in babies.

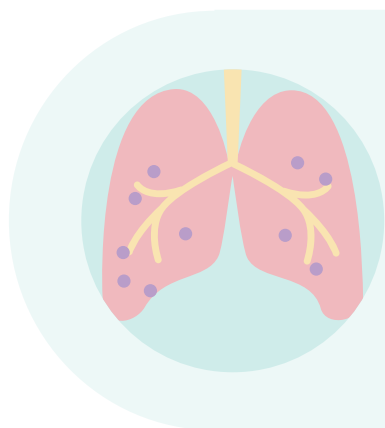
## Premature babies are at higher risk of becoming very sick. Here's why:



photo credit courtesy of @NappyStock

### 1) Immature lungs

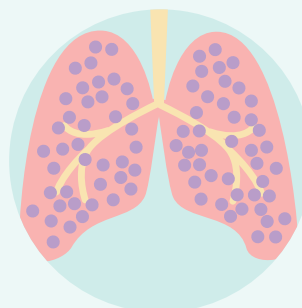
**Immature lungs** put premature babies at greater risk of respiratory infections. The lungs are among the last organs to develop before birth.



**Premature Babies**  
(born less than 37 weeks)

Normal lung development is **interrupted** by birth.

This makes breathing more difficult, and **increases the risk** of respiratory infections.



**Full Term Babies**

Lungs fully develop in the womb **without interruption**.

There is **less risk** for complications from respiratory infections.

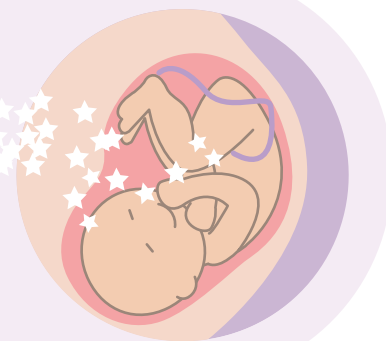
### 2) Less antibodies

**Protective antibodies** that fight infection are passed from the mother across the placenta, mostly in the last few months of pregnancy. The premature baby misses out on the full amount of these antibodies and may also have difficulty producing their own.

**Antibody levels at gestational ages and term:**



**Antibodies** are proteins made in the body by a special type of white blood cell. They protect against viruses and bacteria that can make us sick, and help us to fight infections.



Visit us online for more information on how to reduce the risk to your baby, plus other useful resources and programs focused on premature babies and their families.

**CPBF**  Canadian Premature Babies Foundation  
[canadianpreemies.org](http://canadianpreemies.org)

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