

Protecting Your Child from RSV

FOR PARENTS AND EXPECTANT PARENTS

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a major cause of respiratory illness that affects the airway and lungs, especially in babies and young children.

RSV often causes cold-like symptoms and is the most common cause of a chest infection called bronchiolitis. Babies and young children often have mild illness from RSV and recover quickly. Some babies and young children may develop a severe infection that leads to hospitalization and is life-threatening.

RSV spreads easily from person to person and is most active from late fall to early spring. You and your child can get RSV by having direct contact with a person or surface infected with RSV. You can also get it by being around someone infected by RSV who is coughing or sneezing.



What are the symptoms of RSV?

Symptoms of RSV are similar to those of a cold or flu. They include:



Cough



Runny Nose



Fever



Drinking or Eating Less



Low Energy or Being Unusually Tired



Wheezing



Irritability



Seek medical attention right away if your child is having trouble breathing, is dehydrated, and/or their symptoms are getting worse.

What can I do to protect my infant against RSV?

There are safe and effective ways to keep your child from getting an RSV infection. These include:



A preventive antibody medication that is given to a child



A vaccine that is given to a pregnant person

Only one of these options is needed to help protect a child from RSV. Using both the preventive antibody medication and the vaccine is not needed unless recommended by a healthcare provider.

Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends the preventive antibody medication to be given to a child as the preferred form of protection against RSV infection over the vaccine being given to a pregnant person. This recommendation is based on how well the preventive antibody medication works, how long it provides protection and how safe it is.

Beyfortus™ (also known by the name of nirsevimab) is the preventive antibody medication that is recommended.

It is not a vaccine. Beyfortus works by acting like the antibodies that are made by our bodies to help get rid of germs and harmful substances.



Is my child eligible to receive Beyfortus?

Your child is eligible to receive Beyfortus during the RSV season (late fall to early spring) in Ontario if they are:

- ✓ Born in 2024 before the RSV season
- ✓ Born during the 2024/25 RSV season
- ✓ Up to two years of age and vulnerable from severe RSV illness during their second RSV season*

*This includes but is not limited to those with chronic lung disease of prematurity, congenital heart disease, immunodeficiency, Down syndrome, cystic fibrosis, neuromuscular disease, congenital airway anomalies.

The RSV season is usually from November to April, but it changes every year and can depend on where you are located in Ontario.



Is Beyfortus safe?

Clinical trials have shown that **Beyfortus is safe for babies and young children**. Beyfortus has also been shown to prevent RSV-related illnesses such as bronchiolitis in babies and to prevent severe RSV infections that require hospitalization.

Side effects after receiving Beyfortus are usually mild and last only a few days. Common side effects include redness, swelling and pain at the injection site, rash, and/or fever.

Beyfortus may safely be given on the same day or within the same week as other immunizations routinely recommended for children.

Getting Beyfortus will not give a child RSV. Although rare, it is still possible for a child to get severely ill from RSV even if they have received Beyfortus.



How is Beyfortus given to my child?

Beyfortus is given as a one-time injection (often in the thigh muscle) to your child by a healthcare provider. The treatment provides protection and immunity against RSV as soon as it is received and works best within the first **six months** after it is given.



When can my child get Beyfortus?

If your baby is born during the RSV season, it is recommended that Beyfortus be given soon after birth to provide protection during the early months when your baby is most vulnerable. If your baby is born in 2024 prior to RSV season or they are at continued high-risk from RSV infection and entering their second RSV season, it is recommended that Beyfortus be given shortly before the RSV season begins.



Where can my child get Beyfortus?

It is recommended that Beyfortus be given at the hospital before your baby is discharged home after birth. Beyfortus can also be given to your baby by your primary care provider or through your local public health unit. For young children that are eligible, Beyfortus may be given at your pediatrician's or primary care provider's office, as well as through outpatient hospital clinics.

Abrysvo™ (also known by the name of RSVpreF) is a vaccine that can be given to a pregnant person to prevent RSV infection in their baby.

- ✓ It is given between **32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy** if the baby's due date is near the start of or during the RSV season.
- ✓ Abrysvo helps the pregnant person's immune system create antibodies that can be passed to the baby during pregnancy. These antibodies will **protect the baby from RSV infection until they are six months of age**.

! Speak with your healthcare provider or local public health unit for more information if you are considering this vaccine.

What are more ways I can protect my child and family from RSV?



Stay home when you are sick and avoid close contact with sick people



Wash your hands often



Clean and disinfect surfaces regularly



Cough or sneeze into your arm



Breastfeed your baby (there are protective antibodies in breastmilk)



Avoid smoking near your child

