

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccines

Vaccines help to prevent illness from bacteria and viruses. They reduce disease spread and can prevent complications and deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases.

What is respiratory syncytial virus?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a contagious respiratory virus. RSV is a seasonal virus that circulates in Canada from the fall to the spring.

How is RSV spread? Who is at risk?

RSV is spread from person-to-person through close contact with respiratory particles or from contaminated surfaces. The virus enters the body through the eyes, nose, or mouth. People of any age can be infected and can get repeat infections.

What are the symptoms of RSV illness?

RSV usually causes mild cold-like symptoms that start two to eight days after RSV exposure and may include runny nose, coughing, sneezing, wheezing, fever, a decrease in appetite, and a decrease in energy. Mild symptoms commonly last one to two weeks.

Severe symptoms may include shallow, rapid, difficult breathing, dehydration, and worsening of other medical conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and congestive heart failure. RSV can cause bronchiolitis (inflammation in the tiny airways) and pneumonia (lung infection in the lower respiratory tract). Infants, young children under two years old, and older adults, especially those with certain chronic health conditions, are at higher risk of severe RSV illness. Individuals with severe RSV infection may require hospitalization.

How can RSV illness be prevented?

Use personal protective measures (e.g., hand washing, covering coughs, staying home when sick) to help prevent RSV infection and its spread.

Monoclonal antibodies are available for select infants and children at increased risk of severe RSV illness. Monoclonal antibodies offer passive immunity (immune protection gained directly from the product rather than through a person's own immune system).

Get vaccinated, ideally right before or during RSV season from fall to spring, if you are 60 years of age or older and at risk of severe RSV illness or if you are 32 to 36 weeks pregnant and the vaccine is recommended by your pregnancy care provider. It is non-live and cannot cause RSV illness. You can receive an RSV vaccine if you have never had one, regardless of past RSV infections.

You **should** receive either RSV vaccine if you:

- Are 75 years of age or older, especially if you have underlying health conditions that increase your risk of severe RSV illness
- Are 60 to 74 years of age and you live in a nursing home

You **may** receive either RSV vaccine if you:

- Are 60 to 74 years of age and you, along with your health care provider, have decided that it is right for you. Factors to consider are your individual risk of severe RSV illness, your risk of exposure to RSV, and your preference for RSV vaccination. Unlike COVID-19 and influenza vaccines, subsequent doses of RSV vaccines may not boost immunity, therefore, selecting when to get the vaccine is important. Some individuals may choose to delay vaccination until they are at greater risk of severe RSV illness (e.g., diagnosed with chronic medical conditions such as heart or lung disorders, diabetes mellitus, kidney or liver disease).

You **may** receive Abrysvo™ if you:

- Are 32 to 36 weeks pregnant just prior to or during RSV season and you, along with information from your pregnancy care provider, have decided that it is right for you based on your medical history, availability of RSV monoclonal antibodies for your infant after birth, your preference for RSV vaccination, etc.

What are the benefits of the RSV vaccine?

RSV vaccine can help to prevent lower respiratory tract disease caused by RSV.

Can I get this vaccine for free?

RSV vaccines are not available for free in Saskatchewan. People at risk for RSV disease should talk with their health care provider about purchasing an RSV vaccine. Some private insurance may cover some or all of the cost of the vaccine. **The Saskatchewan Ministry of Health does not reimburse any costs associated with privately purchased vaccines.**

Who should *not* get a RSV vaccine?

- People who have had a serious or life-threatening reaction to any ingredients in the vaccine or its container.
- People who are moderately to seriously ill, with or without a fever, should postpone immunization.

You can treat a fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) if you are uncomfortable and not sleeping.



TREATING FEVERS AND PAIN:

All ages: acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®, Tempra®)
6 months & older: ibuprofen (e.g., Advil®, Motrin®)
Acetaminophen is preferred in pregnancy.

DO NOT give acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) to anyone younger than 18 years due to the risk of Reye's syndrome.

What are possible reactions to RSV vaccines?

Individuals 60 years of age and older (Arexvy and Abrysvo™):

- Temporary pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site are common reactions to RSV vaccines.
- Other mild reactions may include fatigue, headache, and muscle pain.
- Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) has been reported after RSV vaccination in clinical trials. It is not known if the vaccine caused these events and research is ongoing. The estimated benefits of RSV vaccination currently outweigh the potential risk of GBS.

Pregnancy (Abrysvo™):

- Temporary pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site are common adverse effects.
- Other mild reactions may include headache and muscle pain.
- Maternal vaccination did not result in infant side effects in studies.
- There was no difference in preterm birth rates between those who received vaccine or placebo in studies in high-income countries like Canada. Studies outside of Canada showed a potential risk of preterm birth when given between 24 to 36 weeks of pregnancy. It is not clear if the vaccine caused these events and research is ongoing. In Canada, around 8% of all births occur before term. The rates in the studies were lower than what is expected in the general population. Vaccination between 32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy reduces this potential risk.

It is recommended to stay on-site for at least 15 minutes after vaccination in case you develop anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is a rare, life-threatening allergic reaction that can be treated. Symptoms may include hives, swelling of the tongue, lips, or throat, and difficulty breathing. Call 911 immediately if you develop anaphylaxis after you have left the vaccination appointment.

Who should I report reactions to?

Report any unexpected or adverse reactions to your doctor, nurse practitioner, pharmacist, or call 811 or 911 as soon as possible.

What does RSV vaccine contain?

Abrysvo™ contains a non-infectious protein powder mixed with a diluent. The powder contains: RSV stabilized prefusion F protein, mannitol, polysorbate 80, sodium chloride, sucrose, tromethamine, and trometamol hydrochloride. The diluent contains sterile water for injection.

Arexvy contains a non-infectious protein powder (RSV PreF3 glycoprotein F antigen) mixed with an AS01E adjuvant suspension. The powder contains: trehalose dihydrate, polysorbate 80, potassium dihydrogen phosphate, and dipotassium phosphate. The adjuvant contains: *Quillaja saponaria* Molina, fraction 21 (QS-21), 3-O-desacyl-4'-monophosphoryl lipid A (MPL) from *Salmonella minnesota*, dioleoyl phosphatidylcholine, cholesterol, sodium chloride, disodium phosphate anhydrous, potassium dihydrogen phosphate, water for injection.

Important to Know

Storage:

RSV vaccines must be refrigerated before use. DO NOT FREEZE.

How to take:

Individuals 60 years of age and older (Arexvy and Abrysvo™):

Given as a single dose into a muscle, ideally just prior or during RSV season.

Pregnancy (Abrysvo™):

Given as a single dose into a muscle in advance of or during RSV season between 32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy.

Booster dose:

Individuals 60 years of age and older (Arexvy and Abrysvo™):

Booster doses are not recommended at this time as it is not yet known if protection can be boosted by additional doses.

Pregnancy (Abrysvo™):

The need for additional doses of Abrysvo™ in future pregnancies has not been determined.

Immunization Records

Immunization records are stored in many different places in Saskatchewan. Your pharmacy vaccination may not appear on [MySaskHealthRecord](#) or other registries. Visit medSask.usask.ca for tips for locating your immunization records.

Keep printed immunization records provided by the pharmacy in a safe place for future reference and bring them to each vaccination visit.

REFERENCES:

Product monograph for [Abrysvo™](#)

Product monograph for [Arexvy](#)

Canadian Immunization Guide (CIG): [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) vaccines](#)

NACI [Statement on the prevention of respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) disease in infants](#)

CDC [Vaccines for Older Adults](#)

CDC [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Vaccine VIS](#)

CDC [RSV in Older Adults](#)

PHAC [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\): Prevention and risks](#)

PHAC [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\): Symptoms and treatment](#)

Pharmacist's Letter/Pharmacy Technician's Letter/Prescriber Insights [Preventing RSV](#) (subscription required)

Pharmacist's Letter/Pharmacy Technician's Letter/Prescriber Insights [Analgesics in Pregnancy and Lactation](#) (subscription required)

Vaccines in Pregnancy Canada [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Vaccine](#)