RSV Immunization Program 2025/2026

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a common virus that infects the lungs and respiratory tract. In most healthy older children and adults, RSV appears much like a mild cold and often resolves without complications. However, it can lead to more serious illness in infants under 12 months, particularly those who were born prematurely, as well as in older adults and individuals with underlying heart or lung conditions or weakened immune systems.

For older children and adults, RSV typically causes mild symptoms such as a runny or congested nose, a dry cough, low fever, sore throat, sneezing, and headache.

In high-risk groups, RSV can develop into a more severe infection, sometimes leading to pneumonia or bronchiolitis, which is inflammation of the small airways in the lungs. Other signs of more serious illness may include a high fever, persistent and severe coughing, wheezing, and rapid or difficult breathing. In some cases, oxygen levels can drop low enough to cause cyanosis, a bluish tinge to the skin.

Infants who contract RSV may show distinct signs of distress. These can include shallow and rapid breathing, visible effort to breathe, frequent coughing, poor feeding, unusual tiredness, or irritability. Because infants are especially vulnerable, these symptoms may require urgent medical attention.

Most people with RSV recover within one to two weeks. While many experience only temporary discomfort, some may go on to develop repeated wheezing episodes. Hospitalization is sometimes needed for premature infants or for individuals with chronic heart or lung conditions.

Older Adult RSV Vaccine Program

The following groups are eligible for Ontario's Older Adult RSV vaccine program for the 2025-26 fall season:

- All individuals aged 75 and older
- Individuals 60 to 74 years of age who are also
    - residents of long-term care homes, Elder Care Lodges, or retirement homes including similar settings (e.g., co-located facilities).
    - patients in hospital receiving alternate level of care (ALC) including similar settings (for example, complex continuing care, hospital transitional programs)
    - patients with glomerulonephritis (GN) who are moderately to severely immunocompromised
    - patients receiving hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis
    - recipients of solid organ or hematopoietic stem cell transplants
    - individuals experiencing homelessness
    - individuals who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis

Individuals who have had a transplant (solid-organ or stem cell) are recommended to wait 3-6 months post- transplant to receive RSV vaccine, however, a minimum of 1-month post-transplant may be considered.

Those who have previously received a dose of RSV vaccine are not recommended or eligible to receive another dose this season. Studies on the duration of protection are ongoing and continue to show multi-year protection. The timing for booster doses is unknown.

Pharmacists cannot administer publicly funded RSV vaccine. Those who are eligible will need to access the vaccine from their primary care provider, facility, or outpatient hospital program. Those without a primary care provider can book an appointment at a health unit clinic.

For infants and pregnant individuals, please see the source below for more information or speak with your health care provider.

Sources:

1. https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-health-care-professionals/jfy-healthfax/Docs-Linked-to-PHA's/20250909_rsv-vaccine-program.pdf?sfvrsn=8
2. https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/respiratory-syncytial-virus/symptoms-causes/syc-20353098

For more information on the topics discussed or questions, please contact us at info@nydp.ca

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