

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccine

Get protected, get immunized.

- Vaccines make your immune system stronger. They build antibodies to help prevent diseases.
- Immunization is safe. It is much safer to get immunized than to get these diseases.

What is the RSV vaccine?

The RSV vaccine protects against the RSV virus.

What is RSV?

RSV is a common infection that affects the airways and lungs, also called a respiratory illness. RSV mostly affects babies, young children, and older adults but you can get RSV at any age. It is usually mild but it can be more serious in young children, older adults, and people with certain health problems. You can get it more than once in your life. RSV season tends to start in late fall and last until spring.

RSV symptoms are usually mild cold-like symptoms that get better in 1 to 2 weeks. They include:

- runny nose
- coughing
- sneezing
- headache
- feeling tired
- not feeling hungry or not wanting to eat (poor appetite)
- sore throat

If RSV gets worse, symptoms may include:

- wheezing
- fever

In some cases, RSV can lead to a lung infection (pneumonia) or make other health problems worse.

How does it spread?

RSV can spread in the following ways:

- An infected person sneezes, coughs, talks, or even breathes.
- You breathe in the virus.
- You touch something that has the virus on it (such as hands or a door-knob), then touch your eyes, mouth, or nose.

RSV can live on surfaces for several hours. It can live on unclean hands for 30 minutes or more. You can spread RSV before symptoms start.

How can I stop RSV from spreading?

To stop RSV from spreading:

- Get the RSV vaccine if it is recommended for you.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unclean hands.
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often.
- Cover your cough or sneeze into your arm or a tissue, not your hand.
- Stay home when you are sick.

Who should get the RSV vaccine?

You can get this vaccine if you are age 75 years or older. RSV can make people in this age group very sick, especially if:

- You have problems with your heart, lungs, kidneys, or liver.
- You have diabetes.
- You have a weak immune system.
- You have a condition that affects your nervous system.
- You have a lot of extra weight.

You can also get this vaccine if you are age 60 years or older, and you live in a continuing care or supportive living facility.

If you had a dose of RSV vaccine in the past you do not need another dose.

How many doses do I need?

You need 1 dose of RSV vaccine.

You can get the vaccine anytime of the year, but it is best to get it before RSV season, which usually starts in late fall and lasts until spring.

At this time, more than 1 dose is not recommended. Research is ongoing to find out if you will need another dose.

How well does the vaccine work?

The RSV vaccine helps to:

- lower your risk of getting RSV
- lower your risk of getting very sick or needing care in the hospital if you get RSV
- stop RSV from spreading

There is more to learn about how long protection from the vaccine lasts.

See reverse for more information.

Where can I get the RSV vaccine?

If you are age 60 years or older and live in a continuing care or supportive living facility, you will be offered the RSV vaccine for free at your facility.

If you are age 75 years or older and do not live in a continuing care or supportive living facility, you can book an appointment for free RSV vaccine:

- Book online at a community pharmacy through the Alberta Vaccine Booking System at bookvaccine.alberta.ca.
- Call your local pharmacy to find out if they offer the vaccine.
- Call Health Link at 811.

Many pharmacies will also offer walk-in RSV immunization.

Call Health Link at 811 if:

- You do not have an Alberta personal healthcare card.
- You live in a community where there are no healthcare providers who give vaccines.

If you are not eligible to get the RSV vaccine for free, you may be able to pay for it at a pharmacy. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if it is right for you. You can check with your health insurance provider to see if they cover the cost.

Are there side effects from the RSV vaccine?

There can be side effects from the RSV vaccine, but they tend to be mild and go away in a few days. Side effects may include:

- redness, swelling, or feeling sore where you had the needle
- feeling tired
- a headache
- a fever
- body aches or sore joints
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea) or loose stool (diarrhea)

At least 1 out of 100 people who got this vaccine reported 1 or more of these side effects. In some cases, it is unknown if the vaccine caused these side effects.

It is important to stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after your vaccine. Some people may have a rare but serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. If anaphylaxis happens, you will get medicine to treat the symptoms.

It is rare to have a serious side effect after a vaccine. Call Health Link at 811 to report any serious or unusual side effects.

How can I manage side effects?

- To help with soreness and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area where you had the needle.
- There is medicine to help with a fever or pain. Check with your doctor, nurse practitioner, or pharmacist if you are not sure what medicine or dose to take. Follow the directions on the package.



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- Some people with health problems, such as a weak immune system, must call their doctor if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your doctor even if you think the fever is from the vaccine.

What if I had or am getting another type of vaccine?

It is recommended to get the RSV vaccine 2 weeks before or 2 weeks after getting the influenza or COVID-19 vaccine.

It is recommended to get the RSV vaccine 6 weeks before or 6 weeks after getting any other vaccine.

Research has shown that spacing the RSV vaccine from other vaccines may give you better protection. There is still more to learn about this. Spacing also helps us to understand side effects better.

If you had another vaccine in the last 6 weeks, check with your healthcare provider about when you can get the RSV vaccine.

Who should not get the RSV vaccine?

You may not be able to get this vaccine if:

- You have an allergy to any part of the vaccine.
- You had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it.

If you have allergies or have had a side effect from this vaccine, check with your doctor or a public health nurse before you get the vaccine.

Although you can get the vaccine if you have a mild illness, such as a cold or fever, you should stay home until you are feeling better to prevent spreading your illness to others.

I have a fear of needles. How can I prepare for my immunization?

Many adults and children are afraid of needles. You can do many things before, during, and after immunization to be more comfortable.



Scan the QR code, visit ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort, or call Health Link at **811** for information.

For more information about immunization



Call Health Link at **811**



Scan the QR code or go to ahs.ca/immunize