

## RSV – Frequently Asked Questions

Vaccines against RSV are now available in Canada — and it's normal to have questions. The doctors at the VaxFacts+ Clinic are here to help give you answers.

### What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common respiratory virus that can cause significant illness in certain populations. Symptoms are similar to those of a cold or flu, including a cough, runny nose, fever, and wheezing. In severe cases, RSV can lead to serious chest infections such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia, that may require hospitalization, particularly in:

- Infants, especially those under six months.
- Older adults aged 60 and above.
- Individuals with underlying health conditions.

### How does RSV spread?

RSV spreads through direct contact with infected people or surfaces and through respiratory droplets from coughs and sneezes. The virus is highly contagious and commonly spreads in areas where young children interact.

### What are the RSV prevention options for infants?

1. **Preventive Antibody (Beyfortus):**
  - Beyfortus is an antibody given as a one-time injection to infants to protect them from RSV for up to six months
  - Recommended and covered for:
    - Infants born during the RSV season (Nov 2024 – March 2025)
    - Infants born in 2024, prior to RSV season
    - High-risk infants up to 24 months entering their second RSV season
2. **Maternal RSV Vaccine (Abrysvo):**
  - Given to pregnant individuals between 32-36 weeks of gestation
  - Mom builds antibodies and transfers them to the baby, protecting the baby during the first six months of life

We recommend Beyfortus for infants because it has been shown to provide higher efficacy (approximately 80% against severe RSV infection) compared to maternal vaccination.

### Is Beyfortus safe for babies and infants?

Yes, Beyfortus is approved by Health Canada to be safe and effective. Common side effects include mild swelling or pain at the injection site, and fever. Severe side effects are rare.

### Where can infants receive RSV prevention?

Beyfortus is often administered in the hospital after birth or through primary care clinics and public health units.

### Which older adults and high-risk individuals qualify for RSV vaccination?

In Ontario, RSV vaccination is publicly funded for individuals aged 60 and older who meet high-risk criteria, including:

- Residents of long-term care or retirement homes
- Patients undergoing dialysis or who have received organ or stem cell transplants
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Those identifying as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis

Others can receive the RSV vaccine through private purchase, sometimes covered by insurance.

### What are the RSV vaccination options for older adults?

1. **Arexvy**: An adjuvanted recombinant vaccine designed to protect against severe RSV disease in older adults.
2. **Abrysvo**: A bivalent recombinant vaccine also effective in preventing RSV-related lower respiratory tract disease.

### Can the RSV vaccine be given with other vaccines?

Yes. It is safe and recommended to take RSV vaccine at the same time as other seasonal vaccines, like flu and COVID-19, to enhance protection during respiratory illness season.

### Are RSV vaccines safe for older adults?

Both RSV vaccines, Arexvy and Abrysvo, are safe and well-tolerated. Common side effects include mild pain at the injection site, fatigue, and headache.

### How do I make a phone appointment with a doctor at the VaxFacts+ Clinic?

If you have any questions, concerns, or want to get further clarification by speaking one-to-one with a medical doctor in a confidential and judgement-free space, please make a free appointment at [www.shn.ca/VaxFacts](http://www.shn.ca/VaxFacts).



Book an appointment by visiting [shn.ca/VaxFacts](http://shn.ca/VaxFacts)