



UK Health
Security
Agency



Your guide to the **RSV** vaccine for older adults

How to protect yourself
by having the Respiratory
Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccine



Information on the free RSV vaccine for people who:

- are aged 75 years or older
- are aged 65 to 74 and have a weakened immune system or a long-term lung condition (not including asthma that is under control)
- are an adult of any age living in a care home for older adults

What is RSV?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is an infectious disease of the airways and lungs. RSV infection often causes symptoms similar to a cold, including cough, sore throat, sneezing and runny or blocked nose. It can also make you become wheezy or short of breath and lead to pneumonia and other life-threatening conditions. There is no specific treatment, and most infections will get better by themselves. Every year thousands of older adults need hospital care for RSV, and some of them will die. RSV can be more severe in people with medical conditions such as heart or lung disease or a weakened immune system.

RSV infection is common in young children but is most serious for small babies and for older people.

How do you catch RSV?

RSV infections can occur all year round but cases peak every winter.

RSV can spread through coughs and sneezes. You can help to prevent the spread of the virus by covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze (ideally with a tissue, or else into the bend of your elbow), and you can wash your hands frequently to reduce the risk of picking up the virus. Even with these measures it can be difficult to avoid RSV infection.

The best way to protect yourself is to have the vaccine.

How does the vaccine work?

Almost all older adults will have had several RSV infections during their life. A single dose of vaccine will help to boost protection as you reach an age group at highest risk of serious RSV infection.

Are there any other people eligible for the RSV vaccine?

Pregnant women are also being offered the vaccine to protect their babies from RSV. You can read the guide to the RSV vaccine for pregnant women here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv-maternal-vaccination

Who should have the RSV vaccination?

- everyone age 75 years and older
- people aged 65 to 74 who have a weakened immune system or have a long term lung condition (not including asthma that is under control)
- people living in care homes for older adults (most residents will be eligible because of their age but adults under 75 are also eligible)

These groups are all at higher risk of serious complications from RSV. A UK study found that people with well-controlled asthma were at much lower risk than people with other lung conditions.

Do I need to have the vaccine every year?

No, a single dose is expected to give you good protection for a few years.

Can I have the RSV vaccine at the same time as my flu vaccine?

RSV isn't normally arranged to be given at the same appointment as your flu vaccine.

In certain clinical circumstances, your doctor or nurse can safely offer them at the same time.

Can I have the RSV vaccine at the same times as other vaccines such as COVID-19, shingles, pneumococcal or travel vaccines?

Yes, apart from the flu vaccine (see above) you can always have all of these vaccines at the same time as the RSV vaccine.

Is there anybody who shouldn't have the vaccination?

Almost everybody can have the vaccine, but tell the doctor or nurse if you have ever had a serious allergy to a vaccine, or any of the ingredients.

If you have a minor illness such as a cold you can receive the vaccine, but if you are very unwell or have a fever, the doctor or nurse may advise you to wait until you are better.

Will the vaccine protect me completely?

The vaccine has been shown to reduce the chance of you suffering from severe RSV disease by at least 75 to 80% in the first year after you have it. As with all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective and some people may still get RSV despite having a vaccination. If you do get RSV, it should be less severe.

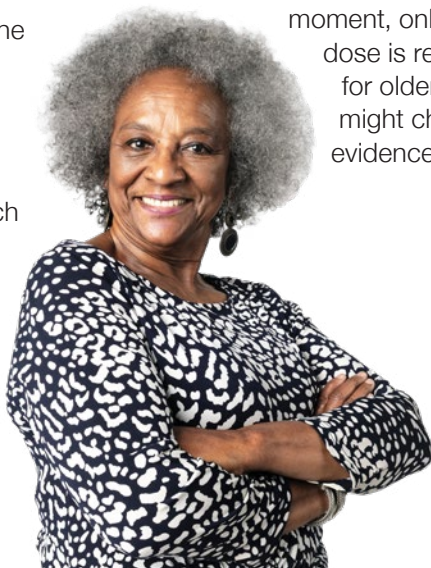
How long will I be protected for?

In the clinical studies, RSV vaccine provided good protection for at least 2 years, and is expected to last longer.

If I have the RSV vaccine before I am 75, do I need another dose when I turn 75?

No, if you have the RSV vaccination as a 65 to 74 year old with an eligible condition, or as a resident age less than 75 in a care home for older adults, you do not need another dose when you turn 75. At the

moment, only a one-off dose is recommended for older adults. This might change as new evidence emerges.



Will I get any side effects?

You may get some soreness, redness or swelling at the site of the injection for a day or two after the vaccination.

Over 12 million doses have been given to older adults in the USA and UK. A rare but serious nervous system condition known as Guillain-Barré syndrome that leads to weakness was reported, around 1 case for every 40,000 to 100,000 doses given, in the six weeks after vaccination. The same condition also occurs after a number of common infections and some vaccines. If you have symptoms such as tingling, numbness, weakness, sharp pain or pins and needles in your hands, feet, arms or legs, you should seek immediate medical attention. Overall it is safer for you to have the vaccine than to risk having a potentially serious RSV infection.

What should I do now?

If you are aged 65 to 74 and have a weakened immune system or a long term lung condition (except asthma that is under control) or are aged 75 and over, contact your GP surgery to book your RSV vaccination.

If you live in a care home for older adults speak to a member of staff at your care home or your GP surgery about how to get the RSV vaccine.

Your GP surgery may contact you about getting the RSV vaccine. This may be by letter, text, phone call or email.



Where can I get more information?

You can read the patient information leaflet for the RSV vaccine called Abrysvo here: **[www.medicines.org.uk/emc/ product/15309/pil](https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/15309/pil)**. If you have further questions, speak to your practice nurse, GP or health team.



You can report suspected side effects on the Yellow Card website or by calling the free phone line 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard