

FAQ About RSV



What is Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a common, infectious respiratory virus. It usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. While most people recover from RSV without complications, it can cause serious illness and require hospitalization, particularly for infants and older adults. Like other respiratory viruses, RSV infections tend to be most common in the fall and winter but can occur year-round.

How is RSV spread?

RSV is spread by direct contact with the virus, such as from the cough or sneeze of an infected person, or from contact with an infected surface. It can be transmitted before an infected person shows any symptoms, while they are ill, and up to 4 weeks after they no longer have symptoms. Most people are exposed to RSV early in their lives and recover without complications, but some groups are more vulnerable.

Are residents of long-term care facilities at increased risk for contracting RSV?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified adults living in nursing homes and long-term care facilities at increased risk for severe RSV infection and complications, including hospitalization and death. RSV can spread quickly in nursing homes and long-term care settings where residents are often frail and have underlying illnesses, and are in frequent close contact with staff, other residents, and visitors. Each year between 60,000 and 160,000 older adults are hospitalized and 6,000-10,000 die due to RSV infection.

How can I protect myself and those I care for?

Common infection prevention measures (frequent hand washing, avoiding close contact with others, covering coughs and sneezes) are effective in preventing the spread of RSV. Two new vaccines are available for adults 60 and older. Both Arexvy (from GSK) and Abrysvo (from Pfizer) are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Both vaccines are single dose and proven effective in preventing severe illness due to RSV.

Who should get the vaccine?

The CDC recommends adults over 60 consider the RSV vaccine using shared clinical decision making. This means working with your healthcare provider to make the best decision in your individual case. Factors such as your health status, risk of severe RSV disease, and your healthcare provider's clinical judgment can help you and your provider decide if the vaccine is right for you.

For more information about RSV see www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html.
For information about the Moving Needles project see www.movingneedles.org.



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