

# Parents:

## What you need to know about RSV

FACT SHEET  
for Parents,  
Expectant  
Parents and  
Caregivers

### What is RSV?

RSV is a common and very contagious respiratory virus that infects the lungs and airways. It can lead to serious lung infections such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia.

Most children who get RSV have mild illness and recover within a week or two without the need for medical attention. But for some infants, RSV can result in severe infection requiring hospitalization and may lead to longer-term health issues.

- RSV is a leading cause of hospitalizations in infants under one, and in rare cases can be life-threatening. Most RSV hospitalizations are in otherwise healthy infants
- Nearly all children are infected with RSV at least once by two years old
- RSV is most active from late fall to early spring

### Why are infants at risk of severe RSV?

- Young infants, especially those under six months, are at higher risk of severe illness from RSV because their immune systems and lungs are not yet fully developed
- Children up to two years of age who have certain health conditions, such as prematurity, congenital heart disease, chronic lung conditions, or Down syndrome, are also at higher risk

### What are the symptoms of RSV?

For most children, RSV symptoms are mild and similar to a cold. They can include:



COUGH



RUNNY NOSE



FEVER



WHEEZING



DECREASED APPETITE  
AND ENERGY



IRRITABILITY

The best protection is to prevent RSV infection in young infants, until their lungs and immune systems have matured and are better able to fight infection. A preventive antibody treatment that can help protect infants from RSV is now available.

**The preventive treatment (nirsevimab, or Beyfortus®) requires just a single dose and is highly effective. It is free of charge in Ontario for:**

- Infants born in 2024 before the RSV season
- Infants born during the 2024-2025 RSV season
- High-risk children up to 24 months of age who have certain chronic conditions

If you have questions about your child's eligibility, please ask your healthcare provider.

## How does it work?

Beyfortus is a “monoclonal antibody” treatment. Monoclonal antibodies are proteins that act like the antibodies your body makes to protect you from harmful germs. These monoclonal antibodies recognize and target the RSV virus to help prevent severe illness in infants and young children if they’re exposed to RSV.

- Protection is immediate and lasts for at least six months, when infants are most vulnerable to severe illness from RSV
- The treatment is only needed once, as it gives an infant’s lungs and immune system enough time to mature and be more able to fight off RSV on their own during future RSV seasons
- It should be given just before or during active RSV season (typically November to April)
- It is very safe with minimal side effects that are generally mild and short-lived. These can include redness, swelling and pain at the injection site, rash and/or fever

## Where can my infant get Beyfortus?

Beyfortus is free and is available through hospitals, primary care and pediatrician offices.

- Beyfortus is given by injection, preferably at birth. This makes sure your infant is protected as soon as possible
- Infants who didn’t receive Beyfortus at birth can receive it through hospital clinics and primary care providers. It can also safely be given at the same time as other seasonal or childhood vaccines



## Have questions?

**Talk to your healthcare provider today. If you need help finding a provider, contact Access York at 1-877-464-9675**

## A maternal vaccine is also available

Individuals who are between 32 to 36 weeks pregnant who will deliver during the RSV season can opt to have a maternal RSV vaccine (Abrysvo®). The vaccine helps them produce antibodies that are passed on to their baby, providing their newborn with protection for up to six months.

Generally, only one treatment option (infant antibody treatment or maternal vaccine) is recommended to protect your baby from RSV. **According to recommendations from Canada’s National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), the infant preventive antibody treatment (Beyfortus) is the preferred option over the maternal vaccine.** This is based on its effectiveness, the immediacy and duration of protection it provides to the baby, and how safe it is.

Please consult your healthcare provider if you are considering the maternal RSV vaccine.