



2025 WA Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Infant and Maternal Immunisation Program

– What parents and carers need to know

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial (sin-SISH-uhl) virus or RSV is a common virus that infects the airways and lungs. It spreads easily by coughing and sneezing. Symptoms of RSV can include:

- runny nose
- coughing
- sneezing
- decreased appetite
- fever
- wheezing and difficulty breathing (including worsening of asthma).

How serious is RSV for babies and young children?

RSV can cause serious respiratory illnesses like bronchiolitis (swelling of the small airways) and pneumonia (lung infection) in babies and young children. RSV infection can also increase the risk of longer-term breathing problems like childhood asthma.

RSV is very common and more than half of all babies will get infected before their first birthday. In Australia, RSV infection is the most common reason babies are hospitalised in their first year of life and every year in WA, about 1 in every 30 babies are hospitalised with RSV.

How can I prevent my baby from getting RSV?

Antibodies targeting the virus can help prevent your baby from becoming ill if they are exposed to RSV. Your baby can get these RSV protective antibodies in one of two ways.

Option A – Abrysvo: The maternal RSV vaccine is available for free under the National Immunisation Program (NIP). It is recommended to receive this during weeks 28 to 36 of your pregnancy.

If you are pregnant, getting one dose of the maternal RSV vaccine (Abrysvo), between 28 to 36 weeks gestation generates anti-RSV antibodies that move across the placenta to the

baby before they are born. This reduces the risk of severe RSV disease in young babies by about 70 per cent. These maternal antibodies protect your baby for up to 6 months from birth, i.e. the period when they are most at risk.

Option B – Beyfortus: If the mother did not get an Abrysvo vaccination while pregnant, babies can receive an RSV immunisation medicine called Beyfortus.

Beyfortus contains ready-made antibodies that target the RSV virus. One injection given to your baby in their leg will protect them for at least 5 months, i.e. the length of a typical RSV season. A single dose of Beyfortus can reduce your baby's chance of being hospitalised from RSV by 80 per cent.

Most infants whose mother received an Abrysvo vaccination will not need Beyfortus. However, to be optimally protected from RSV, sometimes the baby will need a Beyfortus immunisation even if the mother received the vaccine while pregnant. This can happen if the baby has certain medical conditions or if the mother received the vaccine less than 2 weeks before the baby's birth.

Who can receive Abrysvo and when?

- All eligible pregnant women (between 28 to 36 weeks gestation) can receive Abrysvo vaccinations beginning on 3 February 2025.

Who can receive Beyfortus and when?

From 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 the following children are eligible for Beyfortus in WA:

- all babies born between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025, whose mothers did not receive Abrysvo during pregnancy
- Aboriginal children born on or after 1 October 2023
- babies with specific high risk medical conditions born on or after 1 October 2023.

This eligibility is applicable statewide except for in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions, where RSV immunisation will be available to the above cohorts year round because of the increased risk of RSV transmission occurring outside the winter months.

Where to get the RSV immunisation?

Abrysvo and Beyfortus is available through:

- GPs
- maternity hospitals
- community health immunisation clinics
- Aboriginal medical services.

In addition, Abrysvo is also available through participating community pharmacies.

Is Abrysvo safe for pregnant women?

Yes. In pregnant women aged 18 to 49 years who received Abrysvo between 24 and 36 weeks gestation, there was no difference in the rates of serious adverse events in pregnant women who received Abrysvo compared with a placebo. There was also no difference in the rates of serious adverse events in the infants born to pregnant women who received Abrysvo compared with infants born to women who received a placebo.

Is Beyfortus® safe for babies?

Yes. In clinical trials, side effects after Beyfortus were uncommon, occurring in less than 1 per cent of Beyfortus recipients. The most common side effects reported were pain, redness, a rash, or swelling where the injection was given. Most reactions were minor and usually resolved within a few days.

More information about vaccine safety can be found on (www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/Vaccination-safety)

Are there any side effects from Abrysvo or Beyfortus®?

Abrysvo and Beyfortus® cannot cause RSV illness, and most people will have no side effects. Although uncommon, side effects can include:

- injection site reactions (redness, swelling, and pain where the injection is given)
- fever
- fatigue.

This document can be made available in alternative formats.

You can call your local health service or HealthDirect on 1800 022 222 (24 hours) for non-urgent advice on managing possible side effects if needed.

What should I do if I suspect a serious reaction to immunisation?

Serious side effects from immunisation are very rare. However severe allergic reactions can occur. These reactions usually begin within a few minutes to a few hours after the immunisation and can include:

- hives
- swelling of the face and throat
- difficulty breathing
- a fast heartbeat
- dizziness and weakness.

If you or your baby has a reaction that you think is serious, talk to your immunisation provider if you are still in the clinic. If you are not in the clinic and you believe your reaction is severe you should call triple zero (000) for an ambulance or go to your closest emergency department.

The Western Australian Vaccine Safety Surveillance (WAVSS) system is the central reporting service in WA for any significant adverse events following immunisation. If you suspect any serious side effects happened after immunisation, please report this:

- online at (www.safevac.org.au/Home/Info/WA) or
- by calling (08) 6456 0208 (8:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday).

How can I learn more?

- ask your healthcare provider
- visit Immunisation Foundation of Australia (ifa.org.au)
- access your child's Australian Immunisation Register statement at MyGov (www.my.gov.au).
- visit (www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/rsvimmunisation)

