

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Vaccine Fact Sheet – Adults 60+ years

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a respiratory virus that can cause infection in the upper (nose and throat) and lower (airways and lungs) parts of a person's respiratory system. It is a common cause of illness among Ontarians – especially during the fall respiratory season. RSV is spread directly from one person to another through respiratory droplets when infected people cough or sneeze.

Who Qualifies for the Free Vaccine?

For the 2025-2026 RSV season, all adults aged 75 and older are eligible for the publicly funded RSV vaccine, in addition to high-risk older adults aged 60–74 who are also:

- residents of long-term care homes, Elder Care Lodges, or retirement homes including similar settings (such as co-located facilities)
- patients in hospital receiving alternate level of care (ALC) including similar settings (for example, complex continuing care, hospital transitional programs)
- patients with glomerulonephritis (GN) who are moderately to severely immunocompromised
- patients receiving hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis
- recipients of solid organ or hematopoietic stem cell transplants
- individuals who are homeless
- individuals who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis

Available Vaccines

Two vaccines, Arexvy and Abrysvo™, provide protection for those age 60 and older. Both are a single dose and shown to effectively prevent severe RSV disease.

If you received an RSV vaccine last season, you don't need another dose this season. Studies show protection lasting beyond one RSV season for several years. Ongoing studies are underway to determine the need for a booster dose(s).

Possible Side Effects

Like any other vaccine or medication, the RSV vaccine may have some side effects, which in most cases are mild and last only a few days. Common side effects after the RSV vaccine can include pain, redness, and swelling where the shot is given as well as fatigue (feeling tired),

fever, headache, nausea, diarrhea, and muscle or joint pain. If serious reactions occur (e.g., hives, difficulty breathing, swelling, high fever), go to the nearest emergency department.

Considerations for RSV Vaccine

- **Co-Administration**
 - The RSV vaccine can be given with other vaccines.
- **If you are sick**
 - You may still be able to get the RSV vaccine if you're feeling unwell, depending on how severe your symptoms are. If you have a serious illness with or without a fever, it's best to wait until you're feeling better before getting the vaccine. For mild illnesses, like a cold, vaccination is usually fine. Please check with your healthcare provider if you're sick before getting the vaccine.
- **If you have had a previous RSV infection**
 - There is no specific interval that is recommended between RSV infection and RSV vaccination. However, all your symptoms should go away before you receive the vaccine.

For Non-Eligible Individuals:

People between 60 to 74 years of age who do not qualify for the free RSV vaccine can still purchase the vaccine with a prescription from their family doctor or other primary care provider. Some private insurers may cover all or part of the cost of the vaccine. If you do not have a family doctor, please contact WDG Public Health by calling 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006 for assistance.

How can you lower your risk of getting sick?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or shirt sleeve, not into your hands.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth when possible.
- Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces.
- Stay home if you are sick and protect other people from illness.
- Wear a mask in indoor public settings, especially if you are at higher risk.

More information:

- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health: wdgpublichealth.ca
- Ontario Ministry of Health: ontario.ca/RSV
- Contact your primary care provider.

This is for information only. Talk to a health care professional for any medical advice.

