

Infant and High-risk Children Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Prevention Program - Monoclonal Antibody for Infants and High-risk Children

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It is not intended to provide or replace medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. You should talk to a health care professional about health concerns and illness.

What is RSV?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a virus that can cause serious respiratory illness in young infants. RSV is spread directly from one person to another through respiratory droplets when infected people cough or sneeze.

Ontario offers two safe options to help prevent RSV:

1. **Abrysvo™ (RSV Vaccine)** - Given to pregnant individuals at 32–36 weeks gestation.
2. **Beyfortus™ (Monoclonal Antibody)** - Given directly to infants for immediate protection.

Typically, only one of these is recommended. High-risk infants may benefit from both, as advised by a healthcare provider.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends the antibody product, Beyfortus®, over the vaccination of the pregnant individual based on its effectiveness, length of protection, and safety profile.

Beyfortus™ for Infants

- **Immediate Protection:** Beyfortus™ is given as an injection to infants born just before or during RSV season (November to April) and high-risk children in their second RSV season.
- **Eligibility:** Beyfortus™ is available to infants under 8 months entering or born during RSV season and high-risk children up to 24 months with conditions such as:
 - Chronic lung disease
 - Congenital heart disease
 - Immunodeficiency

- Down syndrome
- Cystic fibrosis with respiratory symptoms
- Neuromuscular disease

Effectiveness and Safety

- **Effective:** Clinical data shows Beyfortus™ prevents 82% - 90% of RSV-related hospitalizations and ICU admissions.
- **Safety:** Most infants tolerate Beyfortus™ well, with mild side effects like redness or swelling at the injection site, fever, or rash. Severe reactions are rare.

Possible Side Effects

Beyfortus™ is not a live virus and cannot cause RSV. Common side effects are mild and short-lived, including injection site pain, redness, and mild fever. If serious reactions occur (e.g., hives, difficulty breathing, swelling, high fever), go to the nearest emergency department.

Considerations for Beyfortus™

- **With Other Vaccines:** Beyfortus™ can be given with other routine infant vaccines.
- **After Illness:** A minor illness, such as a cold, should not result in the deferral of administration. Please speak to a health care provider if your baby is unwell before receiving the injection.
- **After RSV Infection:** If an infant has already had an RSV infection during the current season, Beyfortus™ is generally not needed, as the risk of severe reinfection is very low. However, infants with weakened immune systems might still benefit, as their bodies may struggle to fight RSV. Parents of infants with immune challenges should consult a healthcare provider about using Beyfortus™ after an RSV infection.

How can you lower your baby's risk of getting sick?

- **Frequent Hand Washing:** Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub, especially before touching your baby. Ask family members and visitors to do the same.
- **Limit Close Contact:** Avoid crowded places and limit close contact with people who may be sick, especially during cold and flu season.
- **Clean and Disinfect Surfaces:** Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, like doorknobs, toys, and phones, to reduce the spread of germs.

More information

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