

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccine Fact Sheet – Adults 60 years +

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 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 2024-2025 RSV season, the RSV vaccine is free for high-risk individuals aged 60 and older, including:

- Residents of long-term care, retirement homes, or Elder Care Lodges
- Hospital patients receiving alternative care (e.g., complex continuing care)
- Dialysis patients
- Organ or stem cell transplant recipients
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- First Nations, Inuit, or Métis individuals

Available Vaccines

Two vaccines, **Arexvy** and **Abrysvo™**, provide protection for those 60+. 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. The vaccine's protection against RSV-related respiratory illness lasts for at least two seasons.

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:

Adults 60+ who are not eligible for the free vaccine for cost may obtain it in one of the following ways:

- Primary Care Provider
- With a prescription at a pharmacy, though you will need to cover the cost. Some private insurance may offer partial coverage.
- At WDG Public Health by calling 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006.

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, like countertops, keyboards, and doorknobs, especially after someone in the household has been sick.
- 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.