Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

BE WISE IMMUNISE

# Western Australian Infant and Maternal Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Immunisation Program

## What you need to know

### About 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).

### RSV can cause serious illness for children and babies

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.

### Preventing RSV

In most parts of WA, RSV season occurs between April and September. The WA Infant and Maternal RSV Immunisation Program is designed to protect all newborns and infants entering their first RSV season. This program is available statewide during RSV season and year round in the Kimberley and the Pilbara regions due to continued RSV circulation.

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 (Abrysvo) is available for free. It is recommended to receive this from 28 weeks of pregnancy, at every pregnancy, at any time of year.

If you are pregnant, getting one dose of the maternal RSV vaccine (Abrysvo) from 28 weeks 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:** Beyfortus contains antibodies that target the RSV virus. One injection given to your baby in their leg will protect them for up to 6 months. A single dose of Beyfortus can reduce your baby's chance of being hospitalised from RSV by 80 per cent. To get the best protection, it is important that your baby receives Beyfortus before they leave the hospital. They can receive this at the same time as other vaccines, such as the birth dose Hepatitis B vaccine.

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
- the baby was born less than 2 weeks after the mother received Abrysvo vaccination

For up to date eligibility information and to learn where to get immunised, refer to https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/N_R/Respiratory-Syncytial-Virus-Immunisation

Speak to your immunisation provider about the best protection for your baby.

## Vaccine safety

### Abrysvo

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.

### Beyfortus

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 (healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/Vaccination-safety)

### Possible side effects

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

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

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.

### Serious side effects

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.

## Reporting reactions

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

- online at (safevac.org.au/Home/Info/WA) or
- by calling (08) 6456 0208
  (9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday).

## For more information:

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

This document can be made available in alternative formats.

Produced by Communicable Disease Control Directorate © Department of Health 2026

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.

IMM-014690 OCT'26