

RSV vaccine

The RSV vaccine helps protect against infection with RSV, a common virus that can make babies and older adults seriously ill. It's offered on the NHS if you're pregnant, aged 75 to 79, or turned 80 after 1 September 2024.

What the RSV vaccine is for

The RSV vaccine helps protect against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infections.

RSV is a common cause of coughs and colds. Most people get it several times during their life.

It usually gets better by itself, but in some people (especially babies and older adults) it can cause illnesses, such as:

- pneumonia (a lung infection)
- bronchiolitis (a chest infection that affects babies)

These illnesses can cause serious breathing problems. They may need to be treated in hospital and can be life-threatening.

Getting an RSV infection can also make your symptoms worse if you have a lung condition, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

The RSV vaccine helps reduce the risk of serious breathing problems like pneumonia and bronchiolitis.

Who should have the RSV vaccine

You can get a free RSV vaccination on the NHS if:

- you're 28 weeks pregnant or more – the vaccine is recommended during every pregnancy to help protect your baby after they're born
- you're aged 75 to 79
- you turned 80 years old after 1 September 2024

How to get the RSV vaccine

There are different ways to get the RSV vaccine.

If you're pregnant

You should be offered the RSV vaccine around the time of your 28-week antenatal appointment.

Getting vaccinated as soon as possible from 28 weeks will provide the best protection for your baby. But the vaccine can be given later if needed, including up until you go into labour.

Speak to your maternity service or GP surgery if you're 28 weeks pregnant or more and have not been offered the vaccine.

If you're aged 75 to 79 (or turned 80 after 1 September 2024)

If you're aged 75 to 79 (or turned 80 after 1 September 2024) contact your GP surgery to book your RSV vaccination.

Your GP surgery may contact you about getting the RSV vaccine. This may be by letter, text, phone call or email.

You do not need to wait to be contacted before booking your vaccination.

Get vaccinated at a pharmacy (only available in some areas)

If you're pregnant or aged 75 to 79, you can also get a free vaccination at some pharmacies in parts of:

- Essex and Suffolk
- Lancashire and Merseyside
- Leicestershire and the West Midlands
- London

You can book an appointment online, or search for a pharmacy where you can get vaccinated without an appointment.

Find out if you can get a free RSV vaccination at a pharmacy near you

How the RSV vaccine is given

The RSV vaccine is given as an injection into your upper arm.

Unlike some vaccines (such as flu or COVID-19 vaccines), the RSV vaccine is given all year round.

If you're pregnant, you should have the vaccine during every pregnancy. This will help make sure each baby is protected for the first 6 months after they're born, when they're most likely to get seriously ill if they get RSV.

Older adults only need 1 dose, which should protect them for several years.

Having the RSV vaccine at the same time as other vaccines

If you're pregnant, you can have the RSV vaccine at the same time as other pregnancy vaccines, such as the whooping cough and flu vaccines.

But it's best to have them as soon as they're offered rather than waiting to have them at the same time.

The RSV vaccine is not usually given at the same appointment as flu vaccines in older adults, but you can have them at the same time if a doctor or nurse thinks it's needed.

You can have it at the same time as other vaccines, such as the COVID-19, shingles and pneumococcal vaccines.

Who can and cannot have the RSV vaccine

Most people who are eligible for the RSV vaccine can have it.

You only cannot have the vaccine if you've had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of the vaccine or an ingredient in the vaccine.

Getting vaccinated if you're unwell

If you have a high temperature, wait until you're feeling better before having the vaccine.

Contact your GP surgery, pharmacy or maternity service to rearrange your appointment.

RSV vaccine ingredients

There is 1 type of RSV vaccine given on the NHS. You can check the ingredients in the patient leaflet:

[Abrysvo RSV vaccine patient leaflet \(Electronic Medicines Compendium website\)](#)

Side effects of the RSV vaccine

The most common side effects of the RSV vaccine are mild and do not last long.

They can include:

- swelling or pain where the injection was given
- a headache
- an aching body

More serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction are very rare. The person who vaccinates you will be trained to deal with allergic reactions and treat them immediately.

Very rarely, older adults who've had the RSV vaccine may get Guillain-Barré syndrome (a condition that affects the nerves).

Symptoms can include tingling or numbness in your feet and hands, followed by muscle weakness and difficulty moving your joints.

But overall, it's safer to have the vaccine than risk getting a potentially serious RSV infection.

Talk to your doctor or the person vaccinating you if you're worried about side effects.

Is the vaccine safe for my baby?

Studies have shown that having the vaccine during pregnancy is much safer than the risk of your baby getting RSV.

Many thousands of pregnant women have now had the RSV vaccine around the world.