

Factsheet for healthcare practitioners

This information for healthcare practitioners is about the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programme for older adults. There is separate guidance for the [RSV maternal immunisation programme for infant protection](#). Ensure you are using the correct guidance for the programme you are delivering.

Background

There is a significant burden of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) illness in the population of the United Kingdom (UK), which leads to substantial impacts on NHS/HSC services, especially during the winter months. RSV infection can occur throughout the year, but the typical RSV season in the UK starts in October, peaks in December and declines by March.

Since 2023, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has been actively reviewing the latest evidence on immunisation products which can protect both infants or older adults against RSV infection and disease. RSV infection can occur at any age, however the risks of severe illness and complications from RSV are increased in older adults and in neonates and young infants.

The JCVI considered a range of issues including disease epidemiology, vaccine efficacy, vaccine safety and the cost effectiveness of introducing a routine RSV vaccination programme in the UK. The JCVI recommended that a programme that is cost effective should be developed for both children and older adults.

In Northern Ireland from [1 September 2024](#), an RSV vaccine should be offered to:

- adults turning 75 years old on or after 1 September 2024, who remain eligible until their 80th birthday
- adults already aged 75 to 79 years on 1st September 2024 as a one-off catch-up cohort throughout the first year of the programme
- all pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation to provide infant protection.

The RSV vaccine should be offered throughout the year as this is a year-round programme.

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus is a common cause of acute respiratory tract infections which are usually mild and self-limiting. The virus is transmitted via respiratory droplets (coughing, sneezing), through close contact with an infected person or contact with contaminated surfaces. Symptoms usually include runny nose, cough and fever. For infants, and older adults, the virus can lead to more severe illness and hospitalisation.

As previous infection at any age may only confer partial immunity to RSV, individuals may become repeatedly infected with the same or different strains of RSV.

RSV is considered to contribute significantly to GP consultations, hospital admissions and mortality amongst the elderly. There is a significant burden of RSV illness in the UK.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) immunisation programme for older adults: factsheet for healthcare practitioners

This factsheet for health professionals provides details of the immunisation programme for older adults which aims to protect them against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

It covers topics including the symptoms and complications of RSV; eligibility; timing of vaccine administration; choice of vaccine; safety and effectiveness; storage and administration; precautions, side effects and contraindications; and potential errors.

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Details

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Health professionals

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Tags

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