

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)



Protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

KEY FACTS

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common cause of respiratory illness. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bubs can get very sick from RSV. They are **two times more likely to be hospitalised** than other bubs.

Two products help protect bubs from severe RSV:

- **Abrysvo®** – a vaccine for pregnant women
- **Nirsevimab** (also called Beyfortus™) – an immunisation for bubs and children.

Both **Abrysvo®** and **Nirsevimab** are free for all Aboriginal pregnant women and Aboriginal infants

Talk to your doctor about which one is right for you and your bub.

For information about RSV, see the [RSV fact sheet](#).

RSV pregnancy vaccine (Abrysvo®)



What is the RSV pregnancy vaccine?

The RSV pregnancy vaccine is called **Abrysvo®**.

When you get this vaccine during pregnancy, your body makes antibodies and passes them to your bub through the placenta.

It helps stop your bub from getting really sick with RSV and needing to go to hospital.

This protection starts **from birth** and lasts for at least the **first 6 months** of life.

This vaccine is **only for pregnant women**. Other family members do not need this vaccine.

The RSV pregnancy vaccine is **FREE** for pregnant women under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

Studies show that:

- bubs whose mums got the RSV vaccine were better protected
- these bubs were about 70% less likely to go to hospital with RSV
- the protection lasted for the bub's first 6 months after birth.

When should I get it?



The best time to get the RSV pregnancy vaccine is from 28 weeks of each pregnancy, ideally before 36 weeks.

This gives enough time for your body to produce antibodies to protect your bub when they are born. The vaccine can still be given after 36 weeks of pregnancy if it is not possible to have it earlier.

If you get the vaccine less than 2 weeks before giving birth, your bub may not be fully protected from RSV.

You can get the RSV pregnancy vaccine at the same time as other pregnancy vaccines like whooping cough and flu.

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Talk to your doctor, midwife, pharmacist immuniser, Aboriginal Medical Service or health care provider about the RSV pregnancy vaccine.

Can the vaccine make me sick?

No, the RSV pregnancy vaccine does not make you sick.

Some people may have mild side effects after the vaccine, like:

- pain where the needle went in
- headache
- muscle pain
- feeling sick (nausea).

These side effects are usually mild and go away on their own.

If you experience other side effects, or are concerned about side effects, speak to:

- your midwife or doctor
- healthdirect (1800 022 222)
- Aboriginal Medical Service.

In an emergency, call **triple zero (000)** or go to your nearest emergency department.

RSV immunisation for bubs (Nirsevimab)

What is the RSV immunisation for bubs?



- the RSV immunisation for bubs is called **Nirsevimab**
- **Nirsevimab** is a **pre made antibody** that is given as a **needle**. It starts working **straight away** to help your bub fight RSV
- in NSW, it is recommended for **bubs from birth to 6 months of age**
- the RSV immunisation is **free** and helps protect your bub from serious RSV illness.

How it is different from a vaccine

- **Nirsevimab** is different from a vaccine.
- a vaccine teaches the body to make its own antibodies, which takes about two weeks.
- **Nirsevimab** gives your bub ready made antibodies right away.

Studies show that:

- **Nirsevimab** helps stop bubs from going to hospital with RSV
- it works more than 80% of the time
- this protection lasts for the bub's first 6 months.

Should my bub have it?

Some bubs may need **extra protection** with the RSV immunisation, including if:



- mum didn't have the RSV vaccine during pregnancy
- your bub has a medical condition that puts them at higher risk.

If your bub needs the RSV immunisation, it can be given as a needle:

- in the hospital where they are born
- by a doctor
- at an Aboriginal Medical Service
- at a community health centre

Can my bub get sick from the RSV immunisation?

No, the RSV immunisation **does not** contain the RSV virus, and it cannot cause RSV illness.

Most bubs don't have any side effects. If they do, they are usually mild and might include:

- pain or redness in the area where the needle was given
- swelling and hardness on the skin where the needle was given
- rash and fever.

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If you're worried about side effects, speak to:

- your nurse, doctor or paediatrician
- healthdirect by calling **1800 022 222**.
- Aboriginal Medical Service.

In an emergency, call triple zero (000) or go to your nearest emergency department.

Where will my child's immunisation be recorded?

Your child's RSV immunisation will be recorded on the [Australian Immunisation Register \(AIR\)](#).

You can see their immunisation record through logging into your Medicare account in [MyGov](#).

Bring your bub's **Blue Book** to their immunisation appointment so the health worker can record the immunisation.

More information



To learn more:

- read the [Sydney Children's Hospitals Network's Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) monoclonal antibody fact sheet](#)
- read the [Consumer Medicine Information leaflet for nirsevimab](#)
- talk to your doctor or Aboriginal medical service.

