

# Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab)

## Information for parents and carers of Aboriginal babies

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common cause of respiratory infection. It mostly affects young children. RSV symptoms are usually mild. However, some young children can get very sick and need hospital treatment.

Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) is a medicine that can protect bubs from severe RSV disease.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born after 31 October 2023 in NSW are eligible to receive Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab).

### What is respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) causes respiratory infections. RSV mostly affects babies and young children but adults can also get sick from RSV. Most infections in NSW happen in the cooler months of late autumn or winter in NSW.

Most people only get mild symptoms. Symptoms usually begin around 2 to 8 days after exposure to the virus.

Symptoms can include:

- runny nose
- cough
- wheeze
- difficulty breathing
- fever
- cyanosis (bluish or greyish colour of the skin).

Bubs under one year of age are more likely to get breathing problems from RSV infection. This can include [bronchiolitis](#) or [pneumonia](#). They may be unsettled or have trouble with feeding.

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### What is Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab)?

Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) is a medicine that can protect bubs against severe illness from RSV. It is an immunisation that provides a type of immunity that occurs when a person is given antibodies rather than making it through their own immune system. Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) contains pre-made RSV antibodies that protect the body from illness. These antibodies give protection almost immediately after the immunisation.

Medical studies have shown Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) to be around 80 percent effective in preventing children from being hospitalised with RSV during the RSV season.

The antibodies last for at least 5 months but disappear after this time.

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## Why should I immunise my bub with Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab)?

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander bubs are at higher risk of getting very sick from RSV. They are hospitalised with RSV almost two times as often as the rest of the population.

Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) can protect your child against severe illness from RSV. This means that they are less likely to need to go to hospital.

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## What is the NSW Health RSV vulnerable babies program?

Only babies who are at higher risk of severe illness from RSV are eligible for Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) under the NSW Health RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) vulnerable babies program.

The program commenced on 25 March 2024. It will run during the RSV season from March to September 2024.

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## Is my bub eligible for Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab)?

Bubs who are at higher risk of to severe illness from RSV are eligible for a free monoclonal antibody Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) immunisation under the NSW Health RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) vulnerable babies program.

Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) will be offered to bubs in 2024 who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born after 31 October 2023
- all premature bubs born before 37 weeks of pregnancy and born after 31 October 2023
- other infants living with specific chronic and complex health conditions.

Further information about the eligibility for Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) is available on the [NSW Health webpage](#).

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## When is the best time to immunise my bub against RSV?

Babies born just before, or during the RSV season (March to September) should receive one dose of Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab). The medicine provides protection for at least 5 months. This is long enough to protect your baby during the RSV season.

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## Can Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) be given at the same time as childhood vaccines?

Bubs can receive Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) at the same time as routinely recommended childhood vaccines.

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## How is the injection given?

As per the [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation \(ATAGI\) clinical advice](#), for infants born during or entering their first RSV season, the recommended dose for Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) is:

- 50 mg in 0.5 mL if weight is less than 5 kg
- 100 mg in 1 mL if weight is equal to or greater than 5 kg

Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) is given as a single injection in the muscle, usually in the outer part of the thigh. This is similar to the way that your bub has had other injections.

Some children who weigh more than 5 kg may need two injections if a 100mg dose is not available.

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## Could the injection cause RSV illness?

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

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## What are the side effects of Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab)?

In medical trials most infants had no side effects with Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab).

If any side effects did occur, they were mostly tenderness, redness or swelling where the injection was given. These reactions usually go away within a few days.

You can call healthdirect on 1800 022 222 (24 hours) for non-urgent advice on managing side effects if needed. If you are concerned about your bub, you should seek medical advice.

Tell your doctor if your bub:

- has any allergies or ever had a serious allergic reaction to any medicine or vaccine
- has any medical conditions
- is currently unwell.

Bubs and children experiencing a minor illness, such as a cold, can safely receive the RSV immunisation. Bubs and children who are moderately or severely unwell should usually wait until they recover.

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## Where will my child's immunisation be recorded?

Your baby's immunisation with Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab) will be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

Your baby's immunisation record can be accessed on the MyGov website ([www.my.gov.au](http://www.my.gov.au)) and by logging into your Medicare account.

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## Other resources

Talk to your child's doctor for more information on Beyfortus™ (nirsevimab).

More information can be found in the [Consumer Medicine Information leaflet for Beyfortus™ \(nirsevimab\)](#), or ask the doctor for a copy of the Consumer Medicine Information leaflet.

The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network also has information about [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) monoclonal antibody](#).