Ontario

Ministry of Health

Infant and High-risk Children Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Prevention Program – Immunity, Monoclonal Antibodies and Vaccination

Version 3.0 – September 28, 2026

Highlights of Changes

- Updated product information.
- Updated timing for vaccination in pregnancy.

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It is not intended to provide or replace medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. You should talk to a health care professional about health concerns and illness.

Immunity

Immunity is the body's ability to protect itself from infections. One way the body does this is by making antibodies, which help fight viruses and bacteria that cause illness. Antibodies are specific to each disease. For example, antibodies that help protect against measles will not protect against RSV. There are two main types of immunity: active immunity and passive immunity:

- **Active immunity** develops when your body makes its own antibodies after being exposed to a disease or after vaccination. Active immunity usually takes time to develop but can provide longer-lasting protection. How long protection lasts depends on the disease, vaccine and individual factors. Some vaccines provide protection for many years, while others may require additional doses over time to maintain protection. For example, infection with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) does not usually provide long-lasting protection, so people can get RSV more than once during their lifetime.
- **Passive immunity** develops when a person receives antibodies that have already been made. This provides immediate protection, but the protection is temporary and the duration of protection depends on the antibody (e.g.,

protection could last several weeks, months). Babies can receive passive immunity before birth when antibodies pass from a pregnant woman to her baby through the placenta. Babies may also receive antibodies through breastfeeding. Antibody containing products such as monoclonal antibodies can also provide protection against specific diseases when administered (e.g., through an injection).

Protecting Your Infant from RSV: Understanding Your Options

There are two safe and effective options available in Ontario to help protect infants from severe illness caused by RSV (see Table 1 for a comparison of these options):

- **Beyfortus® (nirsevimab)** is a monoclonal antibody given to infants less than 8 months of age. It is also available for certain high-risk children less than 24 months of age. Beyfortus® (nirsevimab) provides antibodies that help protect babies against severe RSV illness shortly after it is given.
- **Abrysvo®** is a vaccine given during pregnancy to help protect infants from severe RSV illness after birth. Under the Ontario RSV prevention program, Abrysvo® is available to eligible pregnant women who are between 28 and 36 weeks of pregnancy and are expected to deliver near the start of or during RSV season, following a discussion with a health care provider. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends vaccination between 28 and 36 weeks of pregnancy, based on available safety and effectiveness evidence. Administration before 32 weeks gestation is considered off-label and may be recommended at the sole discretion of a health care provider.

For most infants, only one RSV prevention product is recommended. In certain situations, such as for infants at high risk of severe RSV illness, a health care provider may recommend both products.

With the significant positive outcomes (i.e. high uptake and reduced hospitalizations) observed through Ontario's RSV prevention program over the past two respiratory illness seasons, Ontario will continue to offer nirsevimab (Beyfortus®) for eligible infants and high-risk children-based on demonstrated effectiveness and duration of protection.

For those interested in an alternative approach, pregnant women also have the option to receive a single dose of the RSV vaccine (Abrysvo®) during their pregnancy to help protect their infant from RSV illness after birth. Abrysvo® is another safe and effective option for infant RSV protection and provides protection through antibodies passed from the pregnant woman to the infant before birth.

Individuals should talk to a health care provider about the options to help protect their infant.

Both Beyfortus® and Abrysvo® help protect infants during their period of highest risk for severe RSV illness. Beyfortus® provides ready-made antibodies directly to the infant and begins working shortly after administration. Abrysvo® is given during pregnancy and takes about two weeks for protective antibodies to develop and be transferred to the baby. Both products provide protection during the infant's first months of life, with protection generally lasting up to six months.

There is currently no RSV vaccine authorized for use for infants and children.

Table 1: Comparison of the Monoclonal Antibody and Vaccine for Infant RSV Prevention

	Monoclonal Antibody Provided to Infant	Vaccine Provided to Pregnant Individuals
Immunizing Agent	Beyfortus® (Nirsevimab)	Abrysvo®
Indication for use	Infants and high-risk children up to 24 months of age (to be administered during RSV season).	Pregnant women, between 28-36 weeks gestation, who will deliver during RSV season. Administration before 32 weeks gestation is considered off-label and may be recommended at the sole discretion of a health care provider.
Type of immunity for infant	Passive	Passive
How it works	Through injection, provides ready-made antibodies for immediate protection.	Stimulates the pregnant woman's immune system to produce antibodies. Antibodies are transferred to the infant through the placenta.

	Monoclonal Antibody Provided to Infant	Vaccine Provided to Pregnant Individuals
Timing of Administration	Just prior to or during RSV season	Just prior to or during the RSV season
How long it takes to be effective	Protection immediately after administration	It takes approximately 2 weeks after vaccination for the pregnant woman to develop antibodies that can be passed to the baby and help protect against RSV.
Duration of Infant Protection	Up to six months and may provide protection throughout an entire RSV season	Up to six months from birth

Additional Information

For more information about RSV, RSV prevention products, or the province's RSV prevention program, please refer to the ministry's RSV website or contact your local public health unit. You may also contact a primary health care provider.