



UK Health  
Security  
Agency



# Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programme

## Toolkit for stakeholders

# Contents

Contents .....	2
Introduction.....	3
Overview of RSV vaccination programme .....	4
RSV vaccination programme – maternal offer for infant protection .....	5
RSV vaccination programme – older adults .....	5
Key messages.....	6
Data and statistics .....	6
What is RSV? .....	7
Further information .....	9
Assets - UKHSA .....	10
Assets – NHS England .....	13
Health publications .....	17
About the UK Health Security Agency .....	19
About NHS England.....	19

# Introduction

This toolkit provides information on the new respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programme.

It aims to support stakeholders to explain and promote the vaccination programme to pregnant women and older people. It contains background information, statistics, key messages, suggested social media copy, social media assets and links to useful information.

It has been produced jointly with NHS England, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

# Overview of RSV vaccination programme

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a major cause of respiratory illness in the UK but is relatively unknown to the public.

On 1 September 2024, two new respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programmes will be introduced.

- 1) A programme to protect infants by vaccinating pregnant women (from 28 weeks)
- 2) A programme for older adults aged 75 to 79 years old

These are the groups based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

These vaccination programmes will save lives and significantly reduce the burden on the NHS during the challenging winter months.

This is a UK-wide programme. The rollout will begin in September 2024 for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in August 2024 for Scotland.

You can read more on the new vaccination programme in the [press release from the Department of Health and Social Care](#) published on 17 July 2024.

The [RSV vaccination document collection is available on GOV.UK](#). This includes updates to the Green Book, new resources for healthcare professionals, leaflets and posters and the systems letter from UKHSA and NHS England.

## RSV vaccination programme – maternal offer for infant protection

All women who are at least 28 weeks pregnant (the eligible cohort) on 1 September 2024, will be offered a single dose of the RSV vaccine to help protect their newborn babies.

After that, pregnant women will become eligible as they reach 28 weeks gestation and remain eligible up to birth.

Women that are at least 28 weeks pregnant should speak to their maternity service or GP surgery to get the vaccine to protect their baby.

Women will be offered the vaccine in each pregnancy.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland will start their schemes in September, while Scotland will begin its rollout from 12 August.

## RSV vaccination programme – older adults

All adults turning 75 years old on or after 1 September 2024 will be eligible for the routine programme and should be offered a single dose of the RSV vaccine. A one-off catch-up campaign for those already aged 75 to 79 years old on 1 September 2024 will be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

Eligible people will be invited by their GP.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland will start their schemes in September, while Scotland will begin its rollout from 12 August.

# Key messages

## Overview of RSV and the vaccination programme:

RSV is a major cause of respiratory illness, particularly dangerous for infants and the elderly. The virus can lead to pneumonia and infant bronchiolitis, requiring hospitalisation and intensive care in severe cases.

This new vaccine offers huge opportunities to prevent severe illness in those most vulnerable to RSV, helping to protect lives and ease winter pressures for the NHS.

We strongly encourage women who are 28 or more weeks pregnant to speak to their maternity service or GP surgery to ensure their baby is protected, and those aged 75 to 79 to come forward for their vaccine when they are invited from September.

### Maternal:

- From September 2024, pregnant women can have a vaccine to help protect their babies against RSV
- You should get your free RSV vaccine when you reach 28 weeks of pregnancy. You should speak to your maternity service or GP surgery to get your vaccine
- Studies have shown the RSV vaccine is very safe for you and your baby
- A vaccine is needed in every pregnancy to give your new baby the best protection

### Older Adults:

- A single dose of vaccine will help to boost protection as you reach an age group at highest risk of serious RSV infection.
- Everyone turning 75 years old on or after the 1 September 2024 will be offered a single dose of RSV vaccine.
- The vaccine will also be offered to those who are already aged 75 to 79 years on 1 September 2024.
- Your GP surgery will contact you to offer you an RSV vaccination appointment if you are eligible
- RSV vaccine is given all year round

# Data and statistics

UKHSA publishes data on people who have tested positive for RSV, and hospital admission rates. This can be found on the [weekly respiratory virus surveillance report](#).

# What is RSV?

## What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a major respiratory virus that is most common over the winter period, typically October to February. While the symptoms are mild for many, RSV accounts for around 30,000 hospitalisations of children under 5 in the UK annually, and for 20 to 30 infant deaths.

RSV can also be severe in older adults, causing pneumonia and flare-ups of existing lung disease and other long-term conditions. It causes around 9,000 hospitalisations in those aged over 75 in the UK each year.

## Who is at risk?

RSV can be especially dangerous for infants and the elderly.

Severe RSV is most common in infants under 1 year old. Babies are particularly vulnerable to RSV lung infections as they have small airways and have limited immunity against the virus. RSV infection in infants can cause a condition called bronchiolitis which is inflammation and blockage of the small air tubes in the lung.

Infants with severe bronchiolitis may need intensive care and the infection can be fatal.

## The symptoms of RSV

RSV may cause a cough or a cold, wheezing, shortness of breath, tiredness and fever. Most cases are not serious and clear up within 2 to 3 weeks.

You can find out more about the [symptoms of RSV on the NHS website](#).

RSV can also cause bronchiolitis in infants, which can make it difficult to breathe and feed. RSV bronchiolitis symptoms may include difficult, fast or noisy breathing and being unsettled or difficult to comfort.

## RSV vaccination

From August 2024 in Scotland and September 2024 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, pregnant women at week 28 or later and everyone aged 75 to 79 or turning 75 years old on or after the 1 September will be offered a vaccine to protect themselves or their babies against RSV.

## How can I protect my baby from RSV?

The best way to protect babies against RSV infection is for the mother to have the vaccine during pregnancy. This will be available from September 2024.

Vaccination reduces the risk of severe RSV lung infection by around 70% in the first six months of life.

The vaccine boosts the pregnant woman's immune system to make antibodies that can fight RSV infection. These antibodies then pass through the placenta to help protect the baby from birth.

The vaccine is offered from week 28 of pregnancy, often by maternity services. If you haven't been offered the vaccine around the time of your 28-week antenatal appointment, contact your maternity service to make an appointment. Having the RSV vaccine in week 28 or within a few weeks of this gives the best protection for the baby, including if they are born early.

Having the vaccine later in the pregnancy will still provide some protection from infection and reduce the risk of spreading infection to the newborn baby. If it wasn't possible to have a dose earlier, it can be given right up until you have the baby.

### **Is more than one dose of RSV vaccine needed?**

Pregnant women should have the RSV vaccine in every pregnancy – this will give your new baby the best protection.

In older adults, a single dose is expected to give good protection for a few years. A single dose of vaccine will help to boost protection as you reach an age group at highest risk of serious RSV infection.

### **Preventing the spread of RSV**

RSV can spread through coughs and sneezes.

You can help to prevent the spread of the virus by covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze (ideally with a tissue, or else into the bend of your elbow), and you can wash your hands with warm soapy water frequently to kill the germs.

If you have symptoms that could be RSV you should ideally try and avoid young babies, though this isn't going to be possible if you are a new parent. It is perfectly okay for parents to ask people with colds to keep away from newborn babies, particularly in the first few months, and for babies born prematurely.

Even with these measures it can be difficult to avoid RSV infection. Half of babies catch RSV in their first year and up to 90% of children are infected before they turn 2 years old.

## Further information

You can read more about the new RSV vaccination programme here:

- Department of Health and Social Care press release: [National RSV vaccination programme announced](#) (17 July 2024)
- [RSV vaccination programme document collection](#) on GOV.UK. This includes:
  - [RSV vaccination programmes letter](#)
  - [RSV immunisation programme, JCVI advice](#)
  - [RSV: the green book, chapter 27a](#)
  - [RSV programme: information for healthcare professionals](#)


In July 2024 UKHSA held two webinars aimed at healthcare professionals involved in the commissioning and delivery of the new vaccine programme. If you are a healthcare professional and would like access to the recordings and slides please email [externalaffairs@ukhsa.gov.uk](mailto:externalaffairs@ukhsa.gov.uk)


# Assets - UKHSA

UKHSA’s social media assets are available for [download from Google Drive](#). These can be used by stakeholders on your own channels, to raise awareness of the vaccine offer for those eligible.

UKHSA also has videos available to download of Dr Tami Benzaken, a pregnant Paediatric Registrar, who talks through the importance of speaking to your midwife about what vaccines are available to protect you and your baby.

Examples of assets along with post copy and alt text can be found below:

Asset	Post copy	Alternative (alt) text
<p><b>Maternal offer for infant protection</b></p> 	<p><b>Post copy option 1</b></p> <p>Around 20,000 babies under 1 are hospitalised with the respiratory infection #RSV in the UK each year, and sadly we see 20 to 30 infant deaths as well. Find out more about how vaccination during pregnancy can protect your baby:  <a href="https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/what-is-rsv-and-is-there-a-vaccine/">https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/what-is-rsv-and-is-there-a-vaccine/</a></p> <p><b>Post copy option 2:</b></p> <p>Many are unaware of the respiratory illness #RSV, but it causes 20,000 hospitalisations each year in babies</p>	<p>You can have the RSV vaccine from week 28 of your pregnancy. Having the RSV vaccination in pregnancy reduces your baby’s risk of severe RSV lung infection by around 70% in the first 6 months of life. Speak to your maternity service or GP practice to arrange an appointment.</p>

	<p>under 1, just in England. Find out about the new vaccination programme launching this autumn to help thousands of children &amp; older adults:  <a href="https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/what-is-rsv-and-is-there-a-vaccine/">https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/what-is-rsv-and-is-there-a-vaccine/</a></p>	
<p><b>Older adults</b></p> 	<p><b>Post copy option 1:</b></p> <p>The new RSV vaccination programme for older adults is expected to prevent up to 500 deaths, 2,500 hospital admissions, 15,000 GP visits and 60,000 cases of RSV illness, in the first season alone. Find out more about how the #RSV vaccination can protect you:  <a href="https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/what-is-rsv-and-is-there-a-vaccine/">https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/what-is-rsv-and-is-there-a-vaccine/</a></p> <p><b>Post copy option 2:</b></p> <p>#RSV is a common virus, but for some, it can have much</p>	<p>You'll be offered the RSV vaccine once you turn 75. RSV can cause pneumonia and other life-threatening conditions in older adults, with thousands needing hospital care each year. From Sep 2024 the vaccine will be offered to adults when they turn 75. There will be a one-off catch-up programme for those already aged 75-79.</p>



	<p>more serious consequences. The new RSV vaccination programme launching this September will help to prevent thousands of cases of RSV, GP visits and hospital admissions. Find out more about the programme: <a href="https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/what-is-rsv-and-is-there-a-vaccine/">https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/07/17/what-is-rsv-and-is-there-a-vaccine/</a></p>	
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# Assets – NHS England

NHS England’s assets are available for download via the [Campaign Resource Centre \(CRC\)](#). These are designed to help promote the vaccine to eligible patients and advertise where the vaccine is available.



NHSE also has a video that can be shared of [children's doctor, Dr Lauren Filby, speaking about the importance of the RSV vaccination](#). This is available on YouTube.


Examples of assets along with post copy and alt text can be found below (full size files available on [CRC](#)):

Image	Post copy	Alt text
 <p><b>9 in 10</b> infants will catch respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) before the age of two.</p> <p>RSV vaccination when you're pregnant is the best way to protect your baby.</p>	<p>Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) can cause lung infections like bronchiolitis, making it difficult for newborn babies to breathe and causing 20,000 infants to need hospital treatment each year.</p> <p>Talk to your GP or maternity service to schedule yours from 28 weeks of pregnancy.</p>	<p>An illustration of a hospital with pregnant women stood outside. Text reads: 9 in 10 infants will catch respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) before the age of two. Speak with your maternity service or GP to get your free vaccine.</p>
 <p><b>Protect yourself from serious lung infection</b></p> <p>If you're aged 75 to 79, your GP will contact you about getting your free respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine</p>	<p>People aged 75-79 can get a free vaccination to protect themselves from respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), a common lung infection that can lead to serious illnesses like pneumonia.</p> <p>Read more about RSV vaccination here: <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv/</a></p>	<p>An illustration of older people doing activities in a park. Text reads: Protect yourself from serious lung infection. If you're aged between 75-79, your GP will contact you about getting your free respiratory</p>

		syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine.
	<p>Pregnant women are eligible for a free respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine to protect their babies from serious lung infections.</p> <p>You can get your vaccine from 28 weeks of pregnancy. Talk to your GP or maternity service to schedule yours.</p> <p>Read more:  <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv/</a></p>	<p>An illustration of a pregnant woman talking to a health care professional. Text reads:          Protect your baby from serious lung infection. If you're at least 28 weeks pregnant, speak to your maternity service or GP about getting your RSV vaccination.</p>

Asset	Information	CRC link
<p><b>Posters</b></p> 	<p>Five different poster designs available for the maternal cohort and older adult cohort.</p>	<p><a href="https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-vaccinations/rsv-vaccinations/posters/">https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-vaccinations/rsv-vaccinations/posters/</a></p>

<p><b>Web banners</b></p> 	<p>Web banner promoting the vaccine for both cohorts, available in five different sizes.</p>	<p><a href="https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-vaccinations/rsv-vaccinations/web-banners/">https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-vaccinations/rsv-vaccinations/web-banners/</a></p>
<p><b>AV (digital) screens</b></p> 	<p>Five different AV (digital) screen designs available for the maternal cohort and older adult cohort. All designs are available in landscape and portrait format.</p>	<p><a href="https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-vaccinations/rsv-vaccinations/digital-screens/">https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-vaccinations/rsv-vaccinations/digital-screens/</a></p>
<p><b>'Vaccine available here' posters and AV screens</b></p>	<p>Poster and AV (digital) screen designs for use in settings where the vaccine is available to both cohorts.</p>	<p><a href="https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-vaccinations/rsv-vaccinations/posters-and-">https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-vaccinations/rsv-vaccinations/posters-and-</a></p>

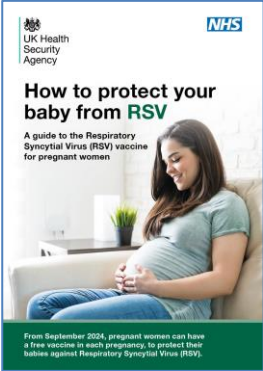
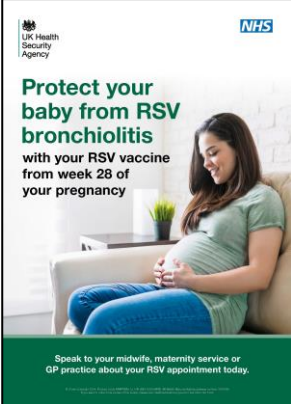
 <p>The image is an NHS advertisement for RSV vaccination. It features a photograph of an elderly man with glasses and a mustache being embraced by a woman and a young girl. The NHS logo is in the top right corner. A green text box at the bottom left contains the text: "If you're at least 28 weeks pregnant or aged 75 to 79, you can get your free respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination here".</p>		<p><a href="#">screens-vaccines-available-here/</a></p>
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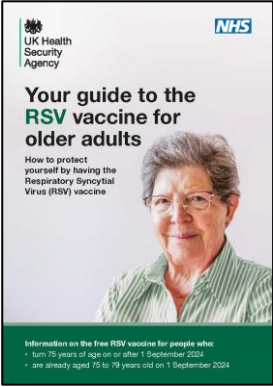
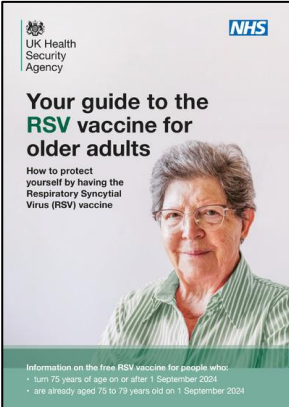
# Health publications

Paper copies of many posters, leaflets and other resources aimed at eligible people are available to order for free (please register/login using your work email address) at [www.healthpublications.gov.uk](http://www.healthpublications.gov.uk)

Resources can be ordered or downloaded, with delivery in 3 to 5 working days.

Further resources, including fully translated and accessible resources, will be shared in the coming weeks.

Health publication	Type	Versions
<p><b>Maternal offer for infant protection</b></p> <p><a href="#">How to protect your baby from RSV</a></p> 	<p><b>Guide/leaflet</b></p> <p>This guide to the RSV vaccination for pregnant women contains the rationale for the programme, who is eligible and when they should have their RSV vaccine, safety and effectiveness, where to get more information and the symptoms of RSV.</p>	<p>This leaflet can be ordered using product code: C24RSV03EN</p>
<p><b>Maternal offer for infant protection</b></p> <p>Protect your baby from RSV</p> 	<p><b>Poster</b></p> <p>There is a poster to promote the programme to pregnant women.</p> <p>This should be displayed in GP surgeries, maternity units or midwifery settings and hospitals.</p>	<p>This poster can be ordered using product code: C24RSV03EN</p>

<p><b>Older adult programme</b></p> <p><b><u>RSV leaflet for older adults</u></b></p> 	<p><b>Guide/leaflet</b></p> <p>This guide to the RSV vaccination for older adults aged 75 to 79. It contains the rationale for the programme, who is eligible and when they should have their RSV vaccine, safety and effectiveness, where to get more information and the symptoms of RSV.</p>	<p>This leaflet can be ordered using product code: C24RSV01EN</p>
<p><b>Older adult programme</b></p> 	<p><b>Poster</b></p> <p>There is a poster aimed at older adults to promote the RSV vaccine. Copies should be ordered and displayed in any setting for older adults including those offering the vaccine.</p>	<p>You can order copies of this poster using product code: C24RSV01EN</p>

# About the UK Health Security Agency

UKHSA is responsible for protecting every member of every community from the impact of infectious diseases, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents and other health threats. We provide intellectual, scientific and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage, to make the nation health secure.

[UKHSA](#) is an executive agency, sponsored by the [Department of Health and Social Care](#).

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency)

# About NHS England

[NHS England](#) provides national leadership and oversight for the health service - supporting and overseeing the commissioning of health services; allocating the budget to different parts of the NHS; commissioning certain services directly; and with specific oversight of providers of NHS services.

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