

CDC, FDA Issue New RSV Immunization Recommendations

Josie Cooper

The Alliance for Patient Access (allianceforpatientaccess.org), founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants. In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access (IfPA), a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. In keeping with its mission to promote a better understanding of the benefits of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality healthcare, IfPA sponsors policy research and educational programming.



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The United States experienced a severe RSV surge in fall 2022. Between October and November 2022, the CDC recorded 126,000 cases of RSV.

Going forward, pregnant women and parents of young children now have more tools to ward off RSV.

Better Protection for Infants and Young Children:

Safe and effective vaccines and immunizations to combat RSV infections have long been a clinical research focus. Now, for the first time, immunizations are available to all infants and pregnant women in their third trimester.

The FDA recently approved the first RSV vaccine, Abrysvo, for pregnant women in their third trimester. The vaccine allows the mother to develop antibodies that protect her and her baby. This protection extends for the first six months of the baby's life.

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The approval comes on the tail of another critical step toward protecting infants and children from RSV. After the FDA approved nirsevimab in July, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices added it to the Vaccines for Children program – ensuring that all infants have access to this new immunization. The program employs federal funding to provide vaccines to children whose families may be unable to afford them.

The introduction of successful RSV immunizations reduces the incidence of severe RSV disease and related hospitalizations and limits the strain RSV season imposes on healthcare systems.

Infants and Children are Especially Susceptible to RSV:

Infants and children have more significant risks if infected with RSV. Their small airways sometimes cannot accommodate the intense bouts of wheezing, coughing, and labored breathing accompanying RSV. This situation can lead to more severe complications, like bronchitis and pneumonia. The CDC estimates that RSV-related infections lead to more than 300 deaths yearly among children under age five.

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Regular hand washing and avoiding sick people, as well as other Preventive measures, can reduce children's risk of RSV and its potentially serious consequences. Nevertheless, broad immunization efforts for pregnant women and infants must also be part of the public health solution.

Suggested Reading:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/rsv/index.html>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2023/p0922-RSV-maternal-vaccine.html#:~:text=CDC%20now%20recommends%20RSV%20vaccine,for%20them%20at%20this%20time>

Josie Cooper is the executive director of the Alliance for Patient Access.

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