

Call to Action: RSV is a Serious Concern: A National Response is Urgently Needed

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The National Perinatal Association (NPA) is an interdisciplinary organization that strives to be a leading voice for perinatal care in the United States. Our diverse membership is comprised of healthcare providers, parents & caregivers, educators, and service providers, all driven by their desire to give voice to and support babies and families at risk across the country.

Members of the NPA write a regular peer-reviewed column in Neonatology Today.



Educate. Advocate. Integrate.

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Cases of respiratory syncytial virus

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RSV began circulating unseasonably early this year, prompting special precautions for those younger than 6 months or with underlying medical conditions.

“The National Perinatal Association fully supports the American Academy of Pediatrics in its call to action and urges the Biden Administration to launch an emergency response to the predicted but unprecedented surge of RSV cases across the nation. (1)”

Now a surge of infections - resulting in record levels of hospitalizations - reveals a greater risk. Some of our communities are **currently seeing populations with low immunity to the virus.**

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The recent rise in RSV infections comes on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that **RSV immunity is typically fleeting**, waning from season to season. Predictive analytics show that, because of necessary COVID-19 precautions, we have decreased exposure to other viruses including RSV. Infection patterns have been altered, secondary to effective isolation, masking, and decreased social contact in response to COVID-19. (2, 3)

With the gradual removal of COVID-19 restrictions, RSV infection rates have reached a crisis proportion in what already promises to be an especially challenging cold and flu season. (3) **Immunizations for all eligible infants and family members is key.** In addition to staying up-to-date with their immunizations for pertussis, flu, and COVID-19, families should ask their providers if their infants and children are candidates for RSV prophylaxis.



The National Perinatal Association also calls for better testing and data collection during this unprecedented cold, flu, and RSV season. Data collection in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), and Emergency Department settings is especially important. Current data has been unreliable as many providers in these settings are testing symptomatic patients and contacts for COVID-19 but not for RSV



or other viral infections. **RSV, influenza, rhinovirus, and metapneumovirus can cause significant morbidity and mortality.** Completing a full respiratory panel test will not only further define the risks for individual patients in these settings, it will also help inform care guidelines, public health policy, and unit policies going forward.

[The National Perinatal Association reaffirms our position that RSV prophylaxis should be offered according to the evidence-based, Food and Drug Association Indication.](#)

“The Food and Drug Association (FDA) indication represents the best guide to effective prophylaxis. It has stood the test of time and addresses the need for prophylaxis that more fully protects the indicated populations. Restrictive policies that exclude up to 75% of the indicated population are inappropriate and should not be utilized. (4)”

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[National Perinatal Association's RSV guidance](#) provides support, insight, and corroboration - as well as further evidence-based support for the FDA indication. (5) **The exigency of the present increases in RSV-swamped emergency rooms, over-capacity pediatric wards, and neonatal intensive care units informs the need for increased vigilance and prophylaxis according to the NPA guidance along the lines of the full FDA indication.**

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Disclosure: The National Perinatal Association www.nationalperinatal.org is a 501c3 organization that provides education and advocacy around issues affecting the health of mothers, babies, and families.

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