

RSV Vaccines and Older Adults



New medicines are available to help protect people from severe illness caused by respiratory syncytial (sin-SUSH-uhl) virus, or RSV. ABRYVVO (a-bris-vo) and AREXVY (a-rex-vee) are vaccines that help protect people ages 60 years and older from getting very sick from RSV. Older adults can get a single dose of this vaccine and may receive whichever vaccine is available.

What is respiratory syncytial virus or RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus. Most people usually get mild, cold-like symptoms and feel better in one to two weeks. RSV can cause more severe illness in some people including premature infants, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.

What are symptoms of RSV?

Symptoms of RSV infection commonly include the following:

- Runny nose
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing
- Loss of appetite

What is severe RSV?

Severe RSV is an illness that can lead to more serious lung infections like pneumonia. People with severe RSV usually have trouble breathing. If left untreated, severe RSV can lead to hospitalization. However, treatment can help prevent these complications.

Contact your healthcare provider and seek care if you are experiencing worsening RSV symptoms or if you are having difficulty breathing.

Who is at risk of getting severe RSV?

Some adults may be at higher risk for severe RSV infection, including the following:

- Adults aged 60 years and older
- Adults with chronic heart or lung disease
- Adults with underlying medical conditions and weakened immune systems
- Adults in assisted living or long-term care centers

Are certain health conditions made worse by RSV infection?

The following health conditions can be made worse by RSV infection:

- Asthma
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a chronic disease that causes breathing difficulties
- Congestive heart failure, a condition where the heart cannot pump enough blood and oxygen around the body

What are the benefits of the RSV vaccines?

The vaccines protect people ages 60 years and older from getting severe RSV. The vaccines provide some protection for at least two winter seasons, which is when RSV circulates the most.

Can I take RSV vaccines with other vaccines?

The RSV vaccine can be taken at the same time as other seasonal vaccines like flu and COVID-19. Ask your healthcare provider if the RSV vaccine is right for you.

What are the risks of the RSV vaccines?

The most common side effects of the RSV vaccines include redness, swelling at the injection site, fatigue, fever, headache, nausea, diarrhea, and muscle or joint pain. These side effects are usually mild.

People should not get the RSV vaccines if they have ever had a severe allergic reaction to any ingredient in AREXVY or ABRYSVO. Please speak to your healthcare provider if you have questions about allergic reaction or ingredients of the RSV vaccines.

How else can I protect myself and my loved ones from RSV?

- Wash your hands often
- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Frequently clean surfaces
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Stay home when sick

References

1. RSV (respiratory syncytial virus). *CDC*. August 4, 2023. Accessed October 18, 2023. www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html.
2. RSV in older adults and adults with chronic medical conditions. *CDC*. July 14, 2023. Accessed October 18, 2023. www.cdc.gov/rsv/high-risk/older-adults.html#:~:text=RSV%20vaccines%20can%20help%20protect,flu%20or%20COVID%2D19%20vaccines.
3. Vaccine information for adults. *CDC*. July 28, 2021. Accessed October 18, 2023. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/find-vaccines.html.