

Scottish Vaccination and Immunisation Programme

RSV Vaccination Programme

June 2025

Lines to support enquiries

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What is Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)?

- RSV is a common and highly infectious respiratory virus that affects the breathing system. It generally causes mild illness with cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, cough, fever, or decrease in appetite.
- Infants under one years of age and the elderly are at greater risk of hospitalisation from severe RSV.
- Most people recover after two to three weeks, but RSV can cause severe illness in some people, including pneumonia (infection of the lungs), bronchiolitis (infection of the small airways of the lungs) and other life-threatening conditions, leading to complications and hospitalisation.
- RSV infection in babies can also include fast or noisy breathing (wheezing), difficulty feeding, being unsettled or difficult to comfort, and tiredness or lethargy. Ear infections and croup (a barking cough caused by inflammation of the upper airways) can also occur in children.

Is RSV serious?

- Globally, RSV infects up to 90% of children within the first two years of life and frequently reinfects older children and adults.
- RSV can be more severe in premature babies, newborn babies (especially in the first 6 months), and those with conditions that affect their heart, breathing or immune system.
- RSV is a major cause of infant mortality globally, and results in 20 to 30 deaths per year in the UK.

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- After babies and infants, older adults are most likely to experience severe complications from RSV that may require hospitalisation. Older adults are more likely to have underlying chronic health conditions such as lung and heart disorders that increase the likelihood of severe RSV complications.

Vaccine eligibility

- If you're turning 75 years old between 1 August 2025 and 31 July 2026, you'll be offered the RSV vaccine. This includes if your 75th birthday is on 1 August 2025 or 31 July 2026.
- You may also be able to get the RSV vaccine if you've not yet been vaccinated, and you're aged between 76 and 79. However this is at the discretion of each NHS board.
- The RSV vaccine is also offered during pregnancy, regardless of age.

Rationale for eligibility

- Decision-making on Scotland's vaccination programme is guided by the independent, expert advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The [JCVI advice can be found here](#).

The RSV vaccine

- Both the maternal vaccination programme and the older adult programme will be implemented with the Abrysvo vaccine, supplied by Pfizer.
- All medicines (including vaccines) are tested for safety and efficacy before they are allowed to be used. The UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for continuously monitoring the safety and effectiveness of all medicines and vaccines once they are approved for use.

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Information for older adults

- NHS Scotland will contact people by post with appointment details once they become eligible. Please wait to be contacted.
- The RSV vaccine led to a 62% reduction in RSV-related hospitalisations among the eligible age group.
- Scotland's RSV vaccination programme began in August last year, targeting adults aged 75-79. By November 2024, 68% of the eligible older adult population had received the vaccine.
- More information on the success of the RSV vaccine is available on the [PHS website](#).

Information for pregnant women

Why is the RSV recommended during pregnancy?

- RSV is the leading cause of respiratory hospital admissions for young babies in Scotland.
- Protect your unborn baby from RSV this winter. Getting vaccinated while pregnant will provide protection against RSV as soon as they're born.

Why are pregnant women vaccinated at 28 weeks?

- Pregnant women can get the RSV vaccine from 28 weeks of their pregnancy. Having the RSV vaccine at this time will help to ensure that protection is passed to the mother's baby, which is important in case their baby is born early.
- If the vaccine is given later in the pregnancy, it will still protect the mother from infection and reduce the risk of them spreading RSV infection to their newborn baby.

Is having the RSV vaccine during pregnancy safe for the baby?

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- Studies have shown the RSV vaccine is very safe for pregnant women and their unborn baby. In a clinical trial of almost 4,000 women, the vaccine had a good safety record and has now been approved by medicines regulators in the UK, Europe and the USA. Many thousands of women have had the vaccine in national programmes, including more than 100,000 women in the USA, with no safety signals reported.
- In the clinical trial, slightly more babies were born early in the vaccine group than in the group who had not had a vaccine. This difference appears to be due to chance, but this is why the vaccine is being given from 28 weeks rather than earlier in your pregnancy.
- Overall, it is much safer for pregnant women and their baby to have the vaccine than to risk the newborn catching the RSV infection.

Additional information

For information on the RSV vaccine for older adults, visit www.nhsinform.scot/rsv-adult

For information on the RSV vaccine for pregnant women, visit <http://www.nhsinform.scot/rsv-baby>