

# Important Information about **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)** and the RSV Immunization for Babies and Young Children

## PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY

### What is respiratory syncytial virus?

- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a virus that mainly affects the lungs and breathing. It spreads mostly in late fall and winter.
- Almost all children will get RSV by 2 years of age. Children can get RSV more than once, but it's usually less serious as they get older.
- RSV can cause a runny nose, cough, sore throat, fever, sneezing, and wheezing (a whistling sound when breathing). These symptoms usually last 1 to 2 weeks.
- Sometimes, RSV can cause more serious problems, like bronchiolitis (swelling of the small airways in the lungs) or pneumonia (infection in the lungs). Around 20 to 30 % of babies with RSV get bronchiolitis or pneumonia. Some babies and young children may need to go to the hospital, or even intensive care.
- Around the world, RSV causes over 100,000 deaths in children under age 5 each year.

### What is the RSV immunization for babies and young children?

- In Nova Scotia, babies and young children can receive immunization to help protect them from becoming seriously ill with RSV. While it may not prevent infection entirely, the immunization reduces the risk of severe illness from RSV.
- The RSV immunization is a *passive* immunization.
  - » This means it gives your child ready-made antibodies (tiny, germ-fighting proteins) to protect them from getting very sick with RSV. These antibodies help protect your child right away. Their body doesn't have to make the antibodies like it normally would after getting sick or getting a vaccine.
  - » The protection doesn't last as long as regular vaccines, but it usually lasts about 5 months, which protects your child when severe RSV infection is most common.
- The RSV immunization is given by injection.

### Who should get the RSV immunization?

- All infants less than 8 months of age entering, or born during, their first RSV season should get the RSV immunization.
- Children less than 24 months of age at increased risk of severe RSV disease entering their first or second RSV season should also get immunized.
  - » Talk to your health care provider to find out if your child is at high risk for RSV.

## CAUTION

### Who should NOT receive the RSV immunization?

- Children who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose or any component of the RSV immunization.
- Let your health care provider know if your child's parent got an RSV vaccine during pregnancy, or if your child has already had RSV this season.

*Please read other side.*

# What to Expect Following the **RSV immunization**

## IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION

*People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any immunization there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.*

### **What are the possible side effects of the RSV immunization?**

- Many infants and children have no side effects following the RSV immunization. However, some may experience fever, rash, or redness/pain around the injection site.

*Over-the-counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) can be used to manage symptoms following immunization, including fever. Some people should not take these medications. Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist before giving acetaminophen to infants under 4 months of age, if you have questions, or are unsure if your child should take this medication.*

### **Call your health care provider if:**

- Your infant is less than 2 months of age and has a fever of 38.0°C (100.4°F) or higher.
- Your child has a fever of 38.5°C (101.3°F) or greater, or the fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Their fever doesn't come down after acetaminophen is taken.
- Your child is ill with other symptoms.

### **Questions?**

If you have any questions about RSV or the RSV immunization for babies and young children, please call your local Public Health office (see list of offices here: <https://www.nshealth.ca/public-health>) or your health care provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the websites of

- Nova Scotia Health, Public Health at <https://www.nshealth.ca/public-health/immunizations>
- Immunize Canada at <https://immunize.ca>
- the Public Health Agency of Canada at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>
- the Canadian Paediatric Society at <https://cps.ca/en/>
- 811 at <https://811.novascotia.ca/>