

# RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) Vaccine: *What You Need to Know*

Many vaccine information statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis)

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis)

## 1. Why get vaccinated?

RSV vaccine can prevent lower respiratory tract disease caused by **respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)**. RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms.

RSV is usually spread through direct contact with the virus, such as droplets from another person's cough or sneeze contacting your eyes, nose, or mouth. It can also be spread by touching a surface that has the virus on it, like a doorknob, and then touching your face before washing your hands.

RSV can cause illness in people of all ages but may be especially serious for infants and older adults. Infants and older adults with chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease, weakened immune systems, or who live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities, are at highest risk of serious illness and complications from RSV.

Symptoms of RSV infection may include runny nose, decrease in appetite, coughing, sneezing, fever, or wheezing. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, resulting in shortness of breath and low oxygen levels. RSV can also sometimes lead to worsening of other medical conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (a chronic disease of the lungs that makes it hard to breathe), or congestive heart failure (when the heart can't pump enough blood and oxygen through the body).

Older adults and infants who get very sick from RSV may need to be hospitalized. Some may even die.

## 2. RSV vaccine

CDC recommends **adults 60 years and older** may receive a single dose of RSV vaccine, based on discussions between the patient and health care provider.

RSV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

## 3. Talk with your health care provider

Tell your vaccination provider if the person getting the vaccine:

- Has had an **allergic reaction after a previous dose of RSV vaccine**, or has any **severe, life-threatening allergies**

In some cases, your health care provider may decide to postpone RSV vaccination until a future visit.

People with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting RSV vaccine.

Your health care provider can give you more information.



**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

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## 4. Risks of a vaccine reaction

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- Pain, redness, and swelling where the shot is given, fatigue (feeling tired), fever, headache, nausea, diarrhea, and muscle or joint pain can happen after RSV vaccination.

Serious neurologic conditions, including Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS), have been reported very rarely after RSV vaccination in clinical trials. It is unclear whether the vaccine caused these events.

People sometimes faint after medical procedures, including vaccination. Tell your provider if you feel dizzy or have vision changes or ringing in the ears.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death.

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## 5. What if there is a serious problem?

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An allergic reaction could occur after the vaccinated person leaves the clinic. If you see signs of a severe allergic reaction (hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, or weakness), call **9-1-1** and get the person to the nearest hospital.

For other signs that concern you, call your health care provider.

Adverse reactions should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your health care provider will usually file this report, or you can do it yourself. Visit the VAERS website at [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov) or call **1-800-822-7967**. *VAERS is only for reporting reactions, and VAERS staff members do not give medical advice.*

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## 6. How can I learn more?

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- Ask your health care provider.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Visit the website of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for vaccine package inserts and additional information at [www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines](http://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines)
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or
  - Visit CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).

