

Older Adult High-Risk Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccine Program

Attention: Physicians, Nurse and Nurse Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, Ontario Health Teams, Hospitals, Infection Prevention & Control Practitioners, Long term care homes, Retirement homes, Indigenous Health Care & Community, Ontario Health Central, Municipalities

Date: August 16, 2024

Ontario's publicly funded Older Adult High-Risk RSV vaccine program for this year includes individuals who are 60 years of age and older who are also:

- Residents of long-term care homes (LTCH), Elder Care Lodges, or retirement homes (Rhome)
- Patients in hospital receiving alternate level of care (ALC) including similar settings (i.e. complex continuing care, hospital transitional programs)
- Patients receiving hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis
- Recipients of solid organ or hematopoietic stem cell transplants
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Individuals who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis

Anyone who received a dose of RSV vaccine during the 2023-2024 season does not need to receive an additional dose this season. Studies continue to show multi-year protection in adults who have received RSV vaccine. The timing for subsequent doses is unknown at this time. Studies are ongoing to determine how long the vaccines provide protection.

There will be two RSV vaccines used in this year's older adult high-risk RSV program – AREXVY and ABRYVVO. Both vaccines are authorized by Health Canada, recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), and have been shown to be safe and highly effective in preventing severe disease from RSV.

While RSV vaccine can be co-administered with other vaccines, LTCHs are encouraged to start vaccinating eligible residents as soon as possible. Residents who declined RSV vaccination last season, should be offered the vaccine again this year.

Who can administer RSV vaccine to those 60+ as part of the publicly funded high-risk program?

Vaccines must be administered by a regulated health professional who is authorized under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 and their specific health profession act to administer vaccines or by a trained



individual under a delegation made in accordance with the requirements set by the regulatory College of the regulated health professional. Physicians, nurse practitioners (NP), registered nurses (RN), registered practical nurses (RPN), and certain pharmacy professionals can administer RSV vaccine.

Before administering an RSV vaccine, a health care professional must ensure they have the required scope of practice and authority, such as a direct order, medical directive or delegation, and the competency, to administer the vaccine.

Currently, pharmacists are not able to administer RSV vaccine under the publicly funded Older Adult High-Risk RSV vaccine program. Those who are eligible to receive the vaccine will need to do so from their residence, hospital, outpatient hospital program, or their primary care provider.

Public health will be offering a limited number of clinics for those without a primary care provider. Public health is also working with partners to ensure the provision of RSV vaccine in LTCHs, Rhomes, shelters, and First Nations communities.

Vaccine Information

- AREXVY and ABRYSSVO are to be administered as a single dose (0.5 mL) intramuscular injection.
- AREXVY and ABRYSSVO are fridge stable and need to be stored at 2°C-8°C.
- AREXVY and ABRYSSVO must be reconstituted with the provided diluent prior to administration. Once reconstituted, the vaccine must be used within 4 hours.
 - AREXVY: once reconstituted can be stored in fridge or room temp
 - ABRYSSVO: once reconstituted must not be stored in fridge. Must stay at room temperature.

Additional information about each vaccine can be found in the product monograph for the product.

AREXVY: <https://ca.gsk.com/media/6988/arexvy.pdf>

ABRYSSVO: https://pdf.hres.ca/dpd_pm/00073900.pdf

The ABRYSSVO vaccine comes with a vial adapter which is used to reconstitute the vaccine without requiring a needle. Pfizer has created a video demonstrating how to use this adapter which can be viewed at the following link: <https://abryssvomaterial.pfizerpro.com/about-abryssvo/reconstitution>

Contraindications and Precautions

- Do not administer RSV vaccine to individuals with a history of **severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)** to any of the vaccine ingredients, including non-medicinal ingredients or any materials found in the vaccine's packaging (such as the vial cap, aluminum seal, or synthetic rubber stopper).
- Those with a severe acute illness with or without a fever should wait until symptoms have subsided before being vaccinated. The presence of a minor illness, such as a cold, should not result in the deferral of vaccination.
- Individuals who have had a previous RSV infection may be offered vaccination against RSV once they are clinically well. There is no specific interval that is recommended between RSV infection and RSV vaccination.

- Individuals who have had a transplant (solid-organ or stem cell) are recommended to wait 3-6 months post-transplant to receive an RSV vaccination. However, a minimum of 1-month post-transplant may be practiced at the discretion of the provider.

Side Effects

Like any other vaccine or medication, RSV vaccines may have some side effects, which in most cases are mild and last only a few days. Common side effects after an RSV vaccine can include pain, redness, and swelling where the shot is given, fatigue, fever, headache, nausea, diarrhea, and muscle or joint pain.

Early safety data from surveillance systems in the United States suggest a potential increased rate of Guillain-Barré syndrome after RSV vaccination in adults 60 years of age and older. However, these events are rare, and the available data cannot confirm an association at this time. This issue will continue to be monitored closely.

Ordering the Vaccine

To order RSV vaccine for the Older Adult High-Risk program, please use the following [order form](#). The majority of our vaccine supply is in single dose boxes so please consider vaccine fridge capacity when ordering. Package dimensions are noted on the RSV vaccine order form.

Individuals Not Eligible for a Publicly Funded Vaccine

Individuals aged 60 years and older who do not qualify for the publicly funded Older Adult High-Risk RSV vaccine program can obtain the vaccine at a pharmacy with a prescription from their primary care provider. Individuals who obtain the RSV vaccine at their local pharmacy will be required to pay out of pocket from the private market. The ministry does not reimburse for publicly funded vaccines or vaccines purchased from the private market. Some private insurers may cover all or part of the cost of the vaccine.

Infant RSV Prevention Program

An expanded Infant RSV prevention program was also [announced by the Ministry of Health on July 25, 2024](#) which will include universal immunization with Beyfortus (a monoclonal antibody that provides passive immunization through protective antibodies to infants) for all infants born in 2024 and through the 2024/2025 RSV season, and for some high-risk infants up to 24 months of age entering their second RSV season. It is anticipated that infants born during the RSV season will receive this product shortly after delivery prior to discharge. The product will be made available to primary care and pediatric specialist clinics for infants born before RSV season and high-risk infants eligible through 24 weeks.

This program will also make available ABRYSV0 vaccine to pregnant individuals to provide protection to the infant after delivery. It is authorized for use in pregnancy from 32 to 36 weeks gestation. More details on the use of this vaccine in pregnancy will be shared noting that the preferred recommendation to protect infants from RSV is the use of Beyfortus shortly after birth as it is more effective than prenatal vaccination with Abrysvo. It is anticipated that infants born in RSV season once the more details on this program will be shared in the upcoming weeks once program information is received from the Ministry of Health.

For more information about the Older Adult High-Risk RSV Vaccine program refer to the following:

- [Ministry of Health: Older Adult High-Risk Respiratory Syncytial Vaccine \(RSV\) Vaccine Program Fact Sheet – Health Care Providers](#)
- [Ministry of Health: Older Adult High-Risk Respiratory Syncytial Vaccine \(RSV\) Vaccine Program Fact Sheet – Vaccine Recipients](#)