

Keeping our bubs

RSV-free this winter!

What is RSV?

RSV (short for Respiratory Syncytial Virus) is a common cold sick virus that mostly affects babies and young kids, but can infect people of any age.

Most babies catch RSV in their first year of life and it is the most common reason for **kids under 5 years** to need to stay in hospital.

Aboriginal babies are at higher risk of becoming very sick and needing to stay in hospital, with **1 in 20 babies** needing hospitalisation for RSV in the first 6 months of life.

Babies who get RSV can be at increased risk of developing **asthma, wheezing** and **allergies** as they grow up. RSV infections usually occur in the colder months, similar to the flu. In the northern parts of WA it can occur all year.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

It can cause fever, runny nose, cough, wheeze and breathing problems (hard/fast). Babies can get very sick with breathing problems and may need to go to hospital to get help with their breathing. When babies are breathing hard they can have problems feeding and might be unsettled.

How do I prevent RSV?

An immunisation (the RSV needle, called nirsevimab) is now available to protect babies against RSV. The needle gives babies antibodies to fight off RSV, and protects them for at least 5 months (about the length of the cold season).

The RSV needle was used in the USA and other countries in Europe during their last winter season. It protected their babies from getting very sick with RSV, and meant that most babies didn't need to go to hospital with RSV as they didn't get as sick.

The RSV needle is given in the same way as other needles (immunisations) that kids get.

Just like other needles, babies can have redness, some swelling or some pain where the needle is given. Sometimes babies might get a rash after having the needle.

Serious side effects, like an allergic reaction, are very rare.

The type of medicine in the RSV medicine is a more effective version of a medicine that has been used to protect premature babies from RSV for more than 20 years.

Who can get the RSV needle?

All Aboriginal children going into their first or second winter/cold season (born on or after **1 October 2022**) can have a **free RSV needle** at their AMS, clinic or GP.

Babies born from **1 May 2024** will be offered the RSV needle at the hospital so they can be protected against RSV before they go home.



More information?

Speak to your midwife, Aboriginal Health Practitioner, nurse or doctor, or **scan the QR code** below for more information from **HealthyWA**.

