

AHCA/NCAL Infection Preventionist Hot Topic Brief

RSV Vaccine in the Older Adult

Focal Problem or Issue

Two vaccines to prevent respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) for use in adults 60 years or older are available, but uptake in long-term care (LTC) has been low. According to CDC, there is a need to protect nursing home residents against severe outcomes of respiratory illnesses. Frail residents of nursing homes with advanced age or those with certain chronic or underlying medical conditions are identified as likely to benefit from receipt of the RSV vaccine.

Background and Scope

In the United States, RSV causes seasonal epidemics of respiratory illness that in older adults, particularly those residing in LTC settings, can lead to increased risk of serious illness, hospitalization, declines in function, or death. Each year, RSV infections cause between 60,000–160,000 older adults in the United States to be hospitalized and 6,000–10,000 deaths among adults 65 years and older.

People at highest risk for severe RSV disease and those most likely to benefit from RSV vaccine includes people older than the age of 60 with certain chronic and underlying medical conditions such as:

- chronic heart, lung, kidney, liver, or neurologic disease;
- weakened immune systems;

as well as:

- frailty and advanced age; and
- living in nursing homes or long-term care facilities.

Both vaccines are recombinant protein vaccines that cause the immune system to produce RSV antibodies. Both are approved as a single dose and were shown in clinical trials to reduce symptomatic RSV lower respiratory disease by more than 80% in the first RSV season after vaccination.

Co-administration of the RSV vaccine with other vaccines is acceptable. As stated in the Hot Topics in November, vaccines — including the influenza, RSV, and COVID-19 vaccines — can be given at the same visit. The vaccines should be administered in different body locations at least one inch apart based on the individual's physical condition and specific needs. More information can be found [here](#).

If you choose not to administer the vaccines on the same day, it is acceptable to administer them within a few days of each other.

As with other vaccines, individuals may have a day or two of constitutional symptoms following the vaccine such as pain, redness, and swelling where the shot is given, fatigue (feeling tired), fever, headache, and muscle or joint pain. These symptoms are easily treated with acetaminophen.

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Suggestions for Practice and Resources

The CDC recommends that adults ages 60 and older be provided the option to receive a single dose of RSV vaccine using shared clinical decision-making (SCDM). In SCDM the decision you should consider multiple factors including:

- the risk factors for severe RSV, which are higher among older adults with chronic diseases who reside in long term care;
- risk of exposure to RSV;
- resident's preferences for RSV vaccine; and
- clinical opinion of the resident's health care provider.

Adults over the age of 60 with increased risks of complications from RSV, which includes residents in LTC settings, are recommended to receive the RSV vaccine.

- Speak to the resident's primary care physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, registered nurse, or facility pharmacist about offering the RSV vaccines to your residents.
- Educate the resident and/or responsible party on the risks and benefits of the vaccine, noting that common side effects include pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site, fatigue, fever, headache, and muscle or joint pain. These are usually mild. Feel free to use CDC's [RSV Vaccine Information Sheet \(VIS\)](#) to help with these discussions.
- RSV vaccines appear to provide some protection for at least two RSV seasons. Additional surveillance and evaluation activities are planned to assess how long the vaccines protect against RSV and whether additional doses will be needed. RSV vaccine is currently not considered an annual vaccine.

Additional Resources

CDC. (2023) | [Frequently Asked Questions about RSV Vaccine for Adults](#)

CDC. (2023) | [RSV in Older Adults and Adults with Chronic Medical Conditions](#)

CDC. (2023) | [Use of Respiratory Syncytial Virus Vaccines in Older Adults: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices – United States, 2023](#)

CDC. (2023) | [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Vaccine VIS](#)

CDC. (2023) | [Shared Clinical Decision Making \(SCDM\): RSV Vaccination for Adults 60 Years and Older](#)

CDC. (2023) | [Respiratory Syncytial Virus vaccines \(RSV\): Fact Sheet for Healthcare Providers](#)