

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccine FAQs: Older Adults



1. What is RSV?

RSV stands for respiratory syncytial virus. RSV is a virus that can make people sick. It spreads from person to person, like a cold. Most adults recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious for some people, including older adults.

2. Who should get an RSV vaccine?

RSV vaccination is recommended for:

- Adults aged 75 years and older
- Some adults aged 50 to 74 years who are at higher risk for severe RSV illness

Talk with your doctor to learn if an RSV vaccine is right for you.

3. What conditions put older adults aged 50-74 at increased risk of severe RSV illness?

- Chronic cardiovascular disease
- Chronic lung or respiratory disease
- End-stage renal disease or dependence on hemodialysis or other renal replacement therapy
- Diabetes mellitus complicated by chronic kidney disease, neuropathy, retinopathy, or other end-organ damage, or requiring treatment with insulin or sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 (SGLT2) inhibitor
- Neurologic or neuromuscular conditions causing impaired airway clearance or respiratory muscle weakness
- Chronic liver disease (e.g., cirrhosis)
- Chronic hematologic conditions (e.g., sickle cell disease or thalassemia)
- Severe obesity (i.e., body mass index ≥ 40 kg/m²)
- Moderate or severe immune compromise
- Residence in a nursing home

4. Do RSV vaccines work?

Yes. RSV vaccines help protect adults from getting very sick from RSV.

RSV vaccines can also help:

- Lower the chance of hospitalization
- Help prevent serious lung infections caused by RSV



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5. Do RSV vaccines have side effects?

Some people may have mild side effects after getting an RSV vaccine, including:

- A sore arm
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Feeling tired
- Fever

These side effects are usually mild and go away in a few days.

6. Can I get an RSV vaccine and other vaccines at the same visit?

Yes. RSV vaccines can often be given at the same visit as other vaccines, such as flu and COVID-19 vaccines. Talk with your doctor if you have questions.

7. Do I need an RSV vaccine every year?

No. The RSV vaccine is not currently an annual vaccine, so people who have previously received it do not currently need to get another dose.

8. Is there treatment available if I get RSV?

Yes. Most adults with RSV get better with rest, fluids, and care at home. Some people, especially older adults and those with certain health conditions, may need medical care if they get very sick. Call your doctor if you have trouble breathing, chest pain, signs of dehydration, or symptoms that are getting worse.



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