

RSV Shots for Fall 2023 - FAQ 9.16.2023

What is RSV? RSV is the most common cause of hospitalization in children under age 1 year. Two to three out of every 100 **infants with RSV infection** may require a hospital stay. Those babies may need oxygen to help with breathing or (intravenous) IV fluids if they are not eating or drinking. Most of these children get better and can go home after a few days.

Do we see this at TVP? YES! Every season in our office, we seen dozens of infants with RSV, many of whom need multiple visits, ER care, or hospitalization before this 3 week illness is over. All of that doesn't account for the countless hours of lost sleep, parental worry, and stress to the infant and family during one bout.

How do you treat RSV? Right now, the treatment is just supportive: fluids, monitoring, anti-fever medications and oxygen if needed. As with most viruses, there is no medication that will alleviate symptoms.

How do you prevent RSV? Like any viral upper respiratory infection, washing hands, avoiding exposure, and masks for those caretakers who are in direct contact with infants are the first lines of defense. In addition, there are exciting preventative measures: 1) maternal immunization while pregnant (Abrysvo), 2) a one-time RSV immunoglobulin injection (nirsevimab or Beyfortus), and 3) a monthly RSV immunoglobulin injection (palivizumab or Synagis). Option 3 is only for those infants <2 with certain high risk factors.

What does TVP recommend for babies birth-8months? TVP recommends that an RSV preventative measure be given to all babies aged birth to 8 months during RSV season if their mothers have not already received the RSV shot while pregnant.

If I am pregnant and receive the RSV shot, will my baby still need the RSV shot once they are born? There is no consensus on this issue at this time. It seems as though if you get this shot as a pregnant person, your infant may not need it later.

Is one of these shots better than the other? At this time, there is not a recommendation of one shot (maternal) vs the other (infant RSV shot). If you are pregnant, please consult your OB on the maternal shot option.

Is the infant RSV shot (Beyfortus/nirsevimab) a vaccine? No. This shot is a passive immunization via the delivery of antibodies to RSV directly. It is an injection given one time during the RSV season.

When can I get the RSV shot for my infant? Pediatricians around the country (and even the world, as these were international studies) are excited about this shot. The shot will be available within weeks. The funding will not be. The cost to give Beyfortus is ~\$590 per dose. This cost is set up by pharmaceutical companies Astra Zeneca and Sanofi for the actual injection (\$495), as well as administrative costs, storage, and other issues that need to be covered to provide the shot (~\$100). Even though this is a costly injection, it will more than pay for itself in avoided ER visits, pediatric office visits, and ultimately hospitalizations (both inpatient and ICU admissions). HOWEVER, insurance companies and employers have yet to confirm IF they will pay for it and if so, how much they will cover. So, until we can confirm adequate payment for this shot, we cannot buy it. Pediatric offices, including TVP, are not funded adequately to cover this cost without confirmation of payment.

What is the current plan to work on this payment issue? The American Academy of Pediatrics is campaigning vigorously for confirmation of adequate payment. We, as a collective organization, are asking pharmacies, public health departments, and hospitals (especially birthing hospitals) to be a location for infants to receive this shot. We will update you on which of these entities will have this shot available to give (including our own office) as those updates are available.

We are also reaching out to insurance carriers and employers to get this shot covered adequately for its members. There has been no resolution as of this time.

How can I help? You have power as an insured person, as an employee, and as a concerned parent. We have seen this in action: talking to you, Raytheon employees!! When your company wasn't going to continue covering telemedicine appointments, we asked you to speak up and within ONE WEEK you had those visits covered again. We are asking everyone who has an interest in preserving the health of our community's infants to call their employer or the number on the back of their insurance card and request coverage for Beyfortus. One letter from our office means a little. Our >8,000 TVP families calling and making the same request means so much more. Thank you in advance for your help! We look forward to a season without RSV hospitalizations in our office!

Please ask your carrier or your employer to: Update their payment policies to allow for the administration of Beyfortus (nirsevimab) during the 2023-2024 season.

Can I just pay out of pocket for this RSV shot? Currently, no insurance company has confirmed adequate payment for Beyfortus. Since this shot is not addressed on your insurance contracts, we may be able to accept personal payments for it. But our mission is to care for all children, not just those whose families can afford this shot. Once, insurance companies offer a payment option, we will not be able to accept personal payments. If they do not contract for a price that covers our costs, we will not be able to offer this shot. That is why we need everyone who is able to help to do so to get adequate payment for this life-saving injection.

Bottom Lines:

1. TVP recommends the Beyfortus shots for all infants aged birth to 8 months old this fall/winter.
2. If you can get it anywhere (your delivery hospital, pharmacy), do so.
3. Our goal is to carry this vaccine at TVP and run an RSV vaccination clinic or give it with your infant's next well visit as soon as we can confirm a payment plan with insurance carriers/employers.
4. We need you! Please call your carrier/employer and request ADEQUATE coverage for Beyfortus (nirsevimab).

We will keep you updated on our progress and RSV shot availability on our website homepage and with these newsletters. As always, thank you for keeping our community's children healthy!