

RSV medication in the Northern Territory

Information for parents and carers



What is Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)?

RSV is a highly contagious viral infection that infects your upper airways and lungs. RSV infection can cause a runny nose, cough, wheeze, difficulty breathing and fever. It mostly affects infants and young children but can occur in older adults.

RSV can cause severe respiratory illnesses including:

- bronchiolitis (infection of the small airways in the lungs)
- pneumonia (infection of the lungs)
- croup (infection of the voice box and wind pipe).

Almost 8% of Aboriginal infants are hospitalised for RSV in the first 6 months of their life. Premature infants and infants with complex medical conditions have higher rates of hospitalisation with RSV infection.



How do you get RSV?

RSV is spread through droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze, and can spread easily between family members and in the community.



What is RSV medication?

Nirsevimab (Beyfortus®) is a medicine that contains antibodies that can prevent severe RSV disease in infants and young children. Antibodies are proteins used by the body to fight off harmful germs.

The antibodies provide protection against RSV straight away and has shown to be 80% effective at decreasing infant hospitalisations due to RSV.





Who is eligible to get the free RSV medication?

Infants born in the Northern Territory from 1 August 2024 to 31 January 2025 may be eligible to receive the free RSV medication.

Infants can get the free RSV medication if they are:

- Born premature
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Less than 6 months of age with complex medical conditions.



When can infants get the RSV medication?

Nirsevimab is only available in hospitals and can be given at birth with other injections and vaccines such as Vitamin K and Hepatitis B vaccine.



What is the dose?

It is a single injection given into the outer part of the infant's thigh.

The dose of Nirsevimab is:

- 50mg in 0.5ml if the weight of the infant is less than 5 kg
- 100mg in 1ml if the weight of the infant is equal to or greater than 5 kg.



What are the side effects?

Most infants who receive Nirsevimab have no side effects. Some uncommon side effects may include pain, redness or swelling at the injection site, rash and fever. These side effects are usually mild and go away within a few days.

Serious side effects are rare but can occur. Parents worried about side effects should call their local health service or hospital for advice.



Where will the RSV medication be recorded?

The RSV medication will be recorded in clinical records and on the Australian Immunisation Register.

