



New Brunswick College of Pharmacists
Ordre des pharmaciens du Nouveau-Brunswick

GUIDANCE: RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS

Respiratory Syncytial Virus

This guidance document has been developed to support pharmacists with the assessment and prescribing of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccine.

Introduction

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a common respiratory virus that causes infections of the respiratory tract and follows an annual seasonal pattern. RSV infection can have severe complications for infants and older adults, including hospitalization, intensive care unit admission, and death. The risk of severe RSV infection increases with age and with certain medical conditions.

In late 2023, two RSV vaccines were approved for use in Canada to prevent RSV infection in adults 60 years of age and older. In January of 2024, one of the vaccines was approved for use in pregnant individuals to provide protection to newborns through the passive transfer of maternal antibodies.

The authority to assess and prescribe medication is given in Section 21 of the New Brunswick College of Pharmacists' Regulations. "Prescribing for Preventable Conditions," under Appendix 2, lists the conditions which are authorized within Section 21. A regulatory change to include RSV on the list of preventable conditions allows patients more timely access via community pharmacists, enhancing public health outcomes by improving vaccine accessibility.

Process

To assess and prescribe RSV vaccine, pharmacists¹ must self-assess to ensure that they satisfy the competency requirements for assessing and prescribing, this should include, but is not limited to:

- adherence to prescribing requirements for Minor Ailments in Section 21 of the Regulations;
- undertaking additional education when needed; and
- reviewing clinical guidelines.

Before prescribing the RSV vaccine, pharmacy professionals must conduct a patient assessment to ensure they:

- are current with the latest clinical guidelines and evidence-based practices related to RSV vaccination;
- identify any contraindications or precautions associated with the RSV vaccine;
- review the immunization status of the patient;
- obtain informed consent from patients before assessment. This involves discussing the benefits and risks of the vaccine and answering any questions the patient may have; and

¹ The term 'pharmacy professionals' means pharmacist or pharmacy technician who is authorized to administer medication by injection by the College throughout this document unless otherwise noted.

- accurately document the assessment and prescribing of the RSV vaccine according to regulatory requirements.

Provision of RSV vaccine to older adults

- RSV immunization is recommended for adults:
 - 75 years of age and older, particularly for those who are at increased risk of severe RSV infection ([List 2](#))
 - 60 years of age and older who are residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities.
- RSV immunization may be considered as an individual decision for adults 60 to 74 years of age in consultation with their health care provider

Provision of RSV vaccine to pregnant persons

Pharmacy professionals can play a crucial role in providing the RSV vaccine to pregnant individuals. RSVpreF (Abrysvo™) vaccine is indicated for a pregnant person. In advance of, or during, the RSV season, these individuals may receive the vaccine to prevent RSV infection in their infant². The following are recommended:

- RSVpreF vaccine is to be given at 32 through 36 weeks gestation to allow time for the development of an immune response and passive antibody transfer to the fetus before birth.
- The vaccine must be administered at least two weeks before birth to allow for the transplacental transfer of protective antibodies.
- Pharmacists are to develop a care plan that takes into account if the expectant mother is between 32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy, and the time of year (whether the infant will be born during the seasonal increase of RSV).
- RSVpreF vaccine can be administered alongside other vaccines recommended during pregnancy.

Suggested clinical tools

- [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\): Canadian Immunization Guide - Canada.ca](#)
- [Medsask plan on preparation and administration of RSV vaccine to adults over 60 years.](#)
- [Medsask plan on preparation and administration of RSV Vaccine to adults over 60 years and pregnant persons.](#)

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/respiratory-syncytial-virus.html#a6.6>