

RSV vaccine: older adults programme

Communications toolkit



Introduction

This toolkit provides information on the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programme.

It aims to support providers, healthcare professionals and wider stakeholders to explain and promote the vaccination programme to all adults aged 75 and over and anyone living in a care home for older adults. It contains background information, statistics, key messages, suggested social media copy, social media assets and links to useful information.

Overview of RSV vaccination programme for older adults

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a major cause of lung infections like bronchitis and pneumonia but is relatively unknown to the public.

This spring 2026, as of 1 April 2026, the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine will be available for free on the NHS to all:

- Adults who are aged 75 or over
- Adults who are living in a care home for older adults

These eligible groups have been determined [based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\)](#)

A single dose of the RSV vaccine is needed to provide protection for a few years. The vaccine can be booked via a patient's GP practice or in participating pharmacies in some parts of England.

The RSV vaccine is also available for pregnant women from 28 weeks of pregnancy to protect their baby from serious lung infection. Pregnancy vaccination assets can be accessed here: [Maternal vaccinations \(RSV, pertussis and flu\) | Vaccinations | Campaign Resource Centre](#)

Key messages

- RSV is a major cause of lung infections like bronchitis and pneumonia, and can be particularly dangerous for older adults leading to difficulty breathing hospital admission
- The RSV vaccine helps to prevent severe illness in those most vulnerable to RSV, helping to cut the risk of being admitted to hospital and protecting lives
- A single dose of the vaccine helps to provide protection for a few years (its full duration of protection is being measured in real time)
- The vaccine has been shown to provide strong protection for older people – [a study recently found it is around 87% effective against the most severe forms of illness needing oxygen in hospital](#) (Symes et al, Lancet Infectious Disease 2025)
- Older adults eligible for the RSV vaccine includes all those aged 75 and over and those living in a care home for older adults
- If you are aged 75 and over, contact your GP surgery to book in for your free RSV vaccine.
- Some pharmacies in parts of England are also offering the RSV vaccine. You can book an appointment online, or search for a pharmacy where you can get vaccinated without an appointment. [Find out if you can get a free RSV vaccination at a pharmacy near you](#)
- If you live in a care home for older adults, speak to a member of staff about how you can get the RSV vaccine

FAQ

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common germ that can infect your lungs. While the symptoms are mild for many, RSV can be severe in older adults, causing pneumonia, bronchitis and flare-ups of existing lung disease and other long-term conditions. It can make it difficult to breathe until you recover from the infection and some people will need treatment in hospital. RSV causes around 9,000 hospitalisations in those aged over 75 in the UK each year.

Who is at risk?

RSV can be especially dangerous for babies and older adults. The RSV vaccine for older adults and pregnant women helps reduce the risk of serious breathing problems like pneumonia which can lead to hospitalisation.

The symptoms of RSV

RSV may cause a cough or a cold, wheezing, shortness of breath, tiredness and fever. Most cases are not serious and clear up within 2 to 3 weeks but it can sometimes be very serious.

You can find out more about the [symptoms of RSV on the NHS website](#).

Why should I get the RSV vaccine?

The RSV vaccine was introduced in September 2024 in England for older adults and pregnant women to protect those most at risk from RSV. People turning 75 are eligible. IN April 2026, the initial catch up campaign for 75 to 79 year olds was extended to include everyone aged 80 and over. Only one vaccine is needed to protect you from developing breathing problems and potential hospitalisation. The vaccine has been shown to provide strong protection for older people – [it is around 75 to 85% effective in preventing hospital admissions](#) with RSV infection in the first year after vaccination.

How can I get the RSV vaccine?

Book an appointment with your GP surgery to get your free RSV vaccine. You can also get a free vaccination at some pharmacies in parts of:

- Essex and Suffolk
- Lancashire and Merseyside
- Leicestershire and the West Midlands
- London

You can book an appointment online, or search for a pharmacy where you can get vaccinated without an appointment.

[Find out if you can get a free RSV vaccination at a pharmacy near you](#)

Is the RSV vaccine safe?

The RSV vaccine has been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and meets the MHRA's strict standards of safety and effectiveness.

Most people who are eligible for the RSV vaccine can have it. You only cannot have the vaccine if you've had a serious allergic reaction ([anaphylaxis](#)) to a previous dose of the vaccine or an ingredient in the vaccine.

Over 12 million doses have been given to older adults in the USA and UK. A rare but serious nervous system condition known as Guillain-Barré syndrome that leads to weakness was reported, around 1 case for every 40,000 to 100,000 doses given, in the six weeks after vaccination. The same condition also occurs after a number of common infections and some vaccines. If you have symptoms such as tingling, numbness, weakness, sharp pain or pins and needles in your hands, feet, arms or legs, you should seek immediate medical attention. Overall it is safer for you to have the vaccine than to risk having a potentially serious RSV infection.

What other vaccines am I entitled to?

If you are aged 75 or over, you can have the RSV vaccine at the same time as other vaccines that you may be eligible for, such as COVID-19, shingles (if you're aged 75 to 79) and pneumococcal vaccines. The flu vaccine tends to be given in a separate appointment but you can have them at the same time if a doctor or nurse thinks it's needed.

Is more than one dose of RSV vaccine needed?

In older adults, a single dose is expected to give good protection for a few years.

How can I prevent the spread of RSV?

RSV can spread through coughs and sneezes. You can help to prevent the spread of the virus by covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze (ideally with a tissue, or else into the bend of your elbow), and you can wash your hands with warm soapy water frequently to kill the germs. Even with these measures it can be hard to avoid infection – if you are eligible take up the offer of vaccination.

If you have symptoms that could be RSV you should ideally try and avoid older adults and young babies

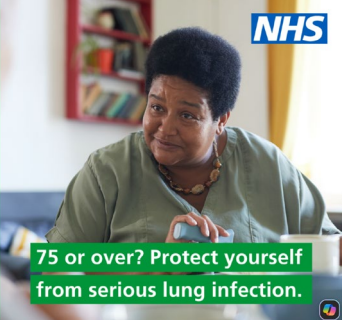
Assets available on the Campaign Resource Centre

NHS England's assets are available for download via the [Campaign Resource Centre \(CRC\)](#).

Examples of assets along with post copy can be found below (full size files available on CRC):

Bulletin copy for providers	From 1 April 2026, all adults aged 75 and over or living in a care home for older adults can get the RSV vaccine. Please support those eligible to come forward through invitations, opportunistic conversations and by utilising the communications assets available on the Campaign Resource Centre (link)
Bulletin copy for providers	The RSV vaccine programme has recently been expanded to include all adults aged 75 and over and those living in a care home for older adults. If you are newly eligible or are still yet to come forwards – don't delay and book your free NHS vaccination in with your GP. RSV cases tend to pick up as we enter the autumn so make sure you are protected ahead of then and book your vaccine appointment with your GP surgery.
Spokesperson script	RSV is not just a winter illness. We see cases increase in winter but it can occur all year round and can make older people seriously ill, so it is vital everyone eligible gets vaccinated. The RSV vaccine has been proven to reduce the chance of those aged 75 and over from ending up in hospital with an RSV infection – at 82% effective. I encourage anyone eligible to get the RSV vaccine as soon as possible by contacting your GP. It could prevent you developing a severe illness like pneumonia and even save your life.
Social media Suggested caption: From today, in addition to those aged 75-79, those aged 80 and over and those living in a care home for older adults can get the RSV vaccine. Contact your GP to book your vaccine or speak to a member of staff at the care home	 The poster features the NHS logo at the top right. A dark blue banner at the top left reads 'Protect yourself from serious lung infection'. The central illustration shows a park scene with a woman in a blue uniform pushing a yellow wheelchair with an elderly woman, and two other elderly people walking nearby. At the bottom, white text on a green background states: 'All adults aged 75 and over can now get the RSV vaccine.'

Posters	
Posters for areas with a community pharmacy offer	
Editable poster for care home use	

Digital screens	Every year, thousands of older people need hospital care for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infection. RSV vaccination is the best way to get protection. 2 Speak to a member of staff at the care home or their GP practice about how to get the RSV vaccine. Find out more: nhs.uk/rsv-vaccine	 Is a friend or family member living in a care home for older adults? They can get protection from serious lung infection.
Digital screens for areas with a community pharmacy offer	You can get your free respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine by: • Contacting your GP practice to book in your vaccine appointment • Booking an appointment at a pharmacy online at nhs.uk/book-rsv • Searching for a pharmacy where you can get vaccinated without an appointment at nhs.uk/rsv-walk-in Only one vaccine is needed for protection for a few years. Find out more: nhs.uk/rsv-vaccine	 75 or over? Protect yourself from serious lung infection.
Web banners		Protect yourself from serious lung infection. If you are aged 75 or over, contact your GP to book in for your free respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine. 

UKHSA resources

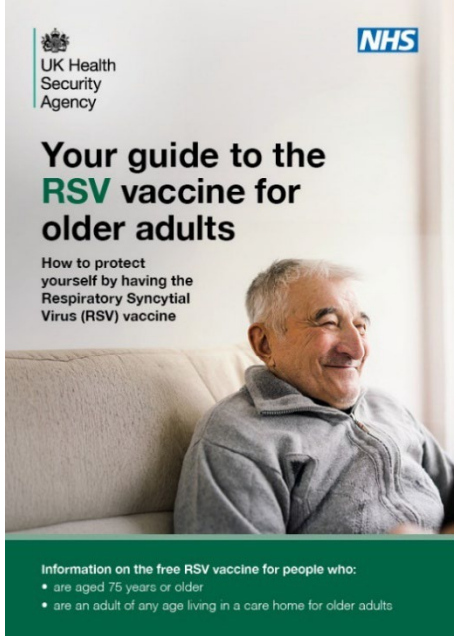
Health publications

Paper copies of many posters, leaflets and other resources aimed at eligible people are available to order for free (please register/login using your work email address) at www.healthpublications.gov.uk

Resources can be ordered or downloaded, with delivery in 3 to 5 working days. These will be uploaded in due course.

Further resources, including fully translated and accessible resources will be available on the Campaign Resource Centre.

Older adult programme	Guide/leaflet This guide to the RSV vaccination for older adults. It contains the rationale for the programme, who is eligible and when they should have their RSV vaccine,	This leaflet can be ordered using product code: 1387447AEN001
------------------------------	---	--

RSV leaflet for older adults 	safety and effectiveness the symptoms of RSV and , where to get more information.	
Older adult programme RSV poster 	Poster There is a poster aimed at older adults to promote the RSV vaccine. Copies should be ordered and displayed in any setting for older adults including those offering the vaccine.	You can order copies of this poster using product code: 1387447BEN001

RSV document collection

The RSV vaccination document collection is available on GOV.UK: [RSV vaccination programme document collection on GOV.UK.](#)

This includes updates to the Green Book, new resources for healthcare professionals, leaflets and posters and the systems letter from UKHSA and NHS England.

Data and statistics

UKHSA publishes data on people who have tested positive for RSV, and hospital admission rates. This can be found on the [weekly respiratory virus surveillance report](#).

About NHS England

NHS England provides national leadership and oversight for the health service - supporting and overseeing the commissioning of health services; allocating the budget to different parts of the NHS; commissioning certain services directly; and with specific oversight of providers of NHS services.

About the UK Health Security Agency

UKHSA is responsible for protecting every member of every community from the impact of infectious diseases, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents and other health threats. We provide intellectual, scientific and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage, to make the nation health secure.

UKHSA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency