

RSV Joins the Vaccine Family: Who Needs It?

Just when we were moving the needle on COVID vaccines, getting more residents and staff to understand the benefit of the shots and backing this up with a growing body of literature, here comes the RSV vaccine. “Everyone has a heightened awareness of vaccines, and they are hearing about the pros and cons from various sources,” said Stephen Creasy, PharmD, director of clinical services at PharMerica, adding, “In truth, every vaccine has risks and benefits. It’s a matter of weighing these and determining if the benefits outweigh any potential negative issues.”

Here are 10 key facts about the RSV vaccine to share with residents, families, and staff to help them make informed decisions:

1. **The FDA has approved an RSV vaccine to be administered as a single shot.** “Studies show that the vaccine has great efficacy,” said Creasy. While no vaccine is 100% effective, studies has shown this one to be about 80% effective in preventing symptomatic lower respiratory tract disease.

2. **Not everyone needs to get the RSV vaccine.** “RSV presents the greatest risk to two populations – the very young and the very old,” said Creasy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults 60 years old and over receive a single dose of RSV vaccine. However, Creasy noted, “Not everyone over 60 needs it. It depends on each person’s health status, as underlying conditions put people at higher risk.” He urges people to talk to their physician before making

a shared clinical decision. The vaccine is expected to roll out and be widely available this fall.

3. **Risks appear to be minimal.** “In their trials, both vaccines showed tolerability similar to other vaccines – injection site pain, redness, and swelling being the most commonly reported,” Creasy said.
4. **It’s uncertain yet if this will need to be an annual vaccine.** “It’s not yet determined how long the vaccine’s protection will last,” Creasy noted. However, he suggested that this could be an injection people get every year, along with their flu shot.



RSV presents the greatest risk to two populations – the very young and the very old.

– Stephen Creasy,
PharmD, director of clinical
services at PharMerica

5. **RSV is not a new illness and has been around for many years.** Traditionally, the focus has been on infants, and the illness in adults often was misdiagnosed as the flu or a bad cold, as it has similar symptoms and presentation, including runny nose, loss of appetite, cough, sneezing, fever and wheezing. “We’re hearing more about RSV because there are vaccines to prevent it. It actually occurs with similar rates to the flu, but it has higher rates of hospitalizations and death; up to 30% of older people hospitalized with RSV end up in the ICU,” said Creasy.
6. **In the past, we generally didn’t test people for RSV.** “If someone went to the doctor with symptoms that seemed like a head cold, they may have been tested for influenza but not for RSV. Now, since COVID, we are

RSV Joins the Vaccine Family: Who Needs It?, Cont.

testing people for COVID, influenza, and RSV. "They all present similarly but have different treatment options," said Creasy.

7. **There is no prescription medication to treat RSV.** However, as the illness can progress to pneumonia in older people, it is important that these individuals comply with physician recommendations regarding the use of over-the-counter medicines or other interventions.
8. **Widespread RSV vaccination for staff is not recommended.** Unless staff members are over 60 and/or have underlying conditions, suggested Creasy, it won't be necessary to mandate RSV vaccines for them. However, it is important to educate them about the vaccine so they can make informed decisions for themselves and family members.
9. **Use standard precautions to prevent RSV spread.** RSV is spread through airborne transmission and direct contact, so it is important to use standard precautions such as handwashing protocols, masking, and disinfecting surfaces.
10. **Have questions? Ask your physician or pharmacist.** It is important not to make assumptions about RSV and to have the facts. Your physician or pharmacist would be happy to answer your questions, and the CDC has a variety of [resources](#).



There's lots more at PharMerica.com

