



Federal Institute
of Public Health

The RSV vaccination

Protection from serious RSV-related
respiratory tract infections for older people



infektionsschutz.de
Wissen, was schützt.

In brief: What is RSV vaccination?

RSV vaccination should **provide protection from serious respiratory tract infections caused by the RS virus.**

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) has recommended the RSV vaccine for all people aged 75 years and over since August 2024. For those who have certain serious underlying health conditions or who are residents in care homes, the RSV vaccine is recommended from the age of 60.

What is RSV and what symptoms can it give rise to?

RSV is the abbreviation for **Respiratory Syncytial Virus**. The RS virus affects the respiratory tract. RSV infections can occur at any age. You can fall ill with RSV multiple times in your life.



RSV is transmitted primarily through droplets when **coughing, sneezing and speaking.**



The virus can also be transmitted through **contact with surfaces.**

After an initial infection in infancy, further illnesses are often mild with symptoms similar to the common cold. However, they can also be severe and lead to such complications as pneumonia. RSV can also aggravate underlying health conditions. This applies to diseases of the heart or lungs, for example. Additional diseases caused by bacteria are also possible.

People with severe cases sometimes have to be treated in hospital, including in intensive care. Fatalities are also possible.



The RSV season generally stretches from October to March. During this period, illnesses caused by the virus are common.

For whom is RSV vaccination recommended?

Vaccination against RSV is recommended for the following groups of people:

- ▶ everybody aged **75 years and over**
- ▶ anyone **with serious underlying health conditions** aged **60 years and over**
- ▶ **anyone living in care facilities** aged **60 years and over**

If the underlying health conditions in people aged under 75 are adequately controlled by medication, it is recommended that you clarify with your doctor whether a vaccination is necessary.



For a long time, RSV-related diseases in adults were underestimated. However, new findings have shown that respiratory diseases caused by the virus should be taken seriously, **especially in those aged 75 and over**. The risk of severe disease progression is also increased in **people with serious underlying health conditions**.



There is no medical treatment that can directly combat the RS virus. RSV can lead to complications, particularly in people aged 60 and over who have serious underlying conditions.

Which underlying health conditions markedly increase the risk of falling seriously ill with RSV?

In severe forms of the following underlying health conditions, there may be an increased risk of severe disease caused by RSV:

- ▶ chronic respiratory diseases,
- ▶ chronic cardiovascular diseases,
- ▶ chronic kidney diseases,
- ▶ chronic neurological disorders,
- ▶ diabetes mellitus and
- ▶ malignant diseases of the haematopoietic system and
- ▶ congenital or acquired immune deficiencies.

Current research suggests that there is no significantly increased risk of severe disease in mild or uncomplicated forms of this disease or when it is controlled adequately with medication.

In addition to any underlying health conditions, it is recommended that the following should also be factored in when deciding whether or not to vaccinate people aged 60 to 74: It is not yet known exactly how long vaccination protection lasts and whether booster jabs will be recommended in future.

Whether vaccination makes sense in individual cases is something to be decided in conjunction with one's GP.

When should the RSV vaccine be administered?

The recommendation is to have the **RSV vaccination once, if possible before the RSV season**. RSV vaccination **in late summer or autumn** is advisable for optimum protection.



Good to know: The RSV jab **can be administered at the same time as the flu jab**.

Is RSV vaccination safe?

The RSV vaccine is well tolerated, effective and safe.

There may be the usual mild side effects such as redness or pain at the injection site as well as headaches and aching limbs. Severe side effects are rare.

The tolerability, efficacy and safety of the vaccine are constantly being studied.



Further information on RSV and how you can protect yourself can be found at www.infektionsschutz.de or at www.rki.de/rsv.

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A personal vaccination recommendation:



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