

# Protecting Victorians in winter

## Winter respiratory illness

Communications toolkit for ACCHOs

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of Health

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# Purpose of this toolkit

This winter wellness respiratory illness and immunisation communications toolkit is primarily for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) but may be used by other organisations.

The materials are designed to be used to encourage staying well this winter and the uptake of the flu vaccination, RSV maternal and infant immunisations, COVID and measles vaccines by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The materials can be used throughout winter 2026.

## You can help by:

- Sharing the materials from this stakeholder kit with your community via social media and digital platforms  
You can also find content at: [www.health.vic.gov.au/our-campaigns/dont-risk-the-flu-get-vaccinated](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/our-campaigns/dont-risk-the-flu-get-vaccinated)
- Printing and displaying posters in this pack, for example, at your local ACCHO, community centre, place of work or community recreational spaces
- Promoting the campaign messaging in your newsletter or stakeholder networks
- Directing people to the Better Health Channel website for information [betterhealth.vic.gov.au/get-vaccinated](http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/get-vaccinated)

## Contact

For more information contact Community and Public Health Communications  
[pph.communications@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:pph.communications@health.vic.gov.au)

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# Section 1: Staying well in winter

# Winter wellness key messages

The flu (influenza), RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), COVID-19 and measles are currently circulating in the Victorian community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience higher rates of some vaccine preventable diseases than non-Indigenous persons.

In the winter months, it's important to follow these steps to protect yourself and others:

- Stay up to date with your immunisations. Many immunisations are free to access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people via Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.
- Stay home if you are unwell.
- Wear a face mask if you have symptoms or visiting sensitive settings, such as health care or aged care facilities.
- Let fresh air in. Open windows and doors when safe and practical, it reduces the amount of viruses in the indoor air. Meet outside when possible.
- Wash or sanitise your hands thoroughly and regularly, particularly before and after touching your face.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Talk with your doctor now if you are at higher risk for complications from these respiratory illnesses.
- If you experience serious symptoms, seek medical attention.

## **Section 2: Influenza**

**Don't risk the flu. Get vaccinated today.**

# Influenza (flu) key messages

Don't risk the flu. Get vaccinated today.

Flu season is here, and it can be serious. Choose to protect yourself and your loved ones with an annual flu vaccine.

## **The vaccine is free for eligible groups:**

- Children aged 6 months to under 5 years
- Adults aged 65 years and older
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and older**
- Pregnant women (at any stage of pregnancy)
- Individuals with certain medical conditions that increase the risk of severe flu.

Find out more visit the [betterhealthchannel.vic.gov.au/get-vaccinated](https://betterhealthchannel.vic.gov.au/get-vaccinated)

# Don't risk the flu poster and social media



[Download](#) poster here.

Download the social media asset and adapt the suggested post copy only:

[Download](#) assets here.

Department of Health channels:

- Instagram: [@VicGovDH](#)
- Facebook [@VicGovDH](#)



**Headline**

Don't risk the flu

**Post copy**

Flu season is here, and it can be serious. Protect your mob with an annual flu jab, free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and older.

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## **Section 3: Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)**

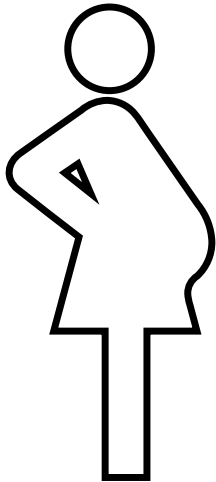
# RSV – Key messages

## Key messages

- RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) is a virus that causes upper and lower respiratory tract infection. RSV infection can cause severe disease, particularly in very young and older people.
- RSV is an important cause of respiratory disease and hospitalisation in older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults, and people with conditions that increase their risk of severe RSV disease.
- Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect against serious disease caused by RSV. Talk to your GP about the RSV vaccine.
- A single dose of RSV vaccine is recommended to protect older people. RSV vaccine may be given at any time of the year, but, where possible, should be offered before the start of the RSV season.
- The vaccine can safely be given at the same time as other vaccines including influenza and COVID vaccines.
- The RSV vaccine for older Australians will be available for free through the NIP from 15 May 2026.

## **Section 3.1: RSV maternal and infant vaccines**

# RSV maternal vaccine – key messages



- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a common virus that can cause serious illness in babies and young children.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bubs can get very sick from RSV and are twice as likely to end up in hospital compared to other babies.
- To keep your bub safe, the RSV Mother and Infant Protection Program, has been introduced.
- This program offers free RSV vaccine to pregnant women between 28 and 36 weeks of pregnancy. When mums are vaccinated for RSV, they pass on protection to their bubs from birth.
- The vaccine is easy to access. Just talk to your healthcare provider such as your GP, pharmacist, midwife or Aboriginal Health Practitioner.
- It's especially important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take advantage of these free immunisations. Protecting bubs from RSV helps ensure they have a healthy start in life.
- For more information, visit the Better Health Channel website or speak to your local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation or other healthcare provider:  
<https://go.vic.gov.au/3Epp7cy>
- For posters and RSV collateral - visit [www.health.vic.gov.au/our-campaigns/dont-risk-the-flu-get-vaccinated](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/our-campaigns/dont-risk-the-flu-get-vaccinated)

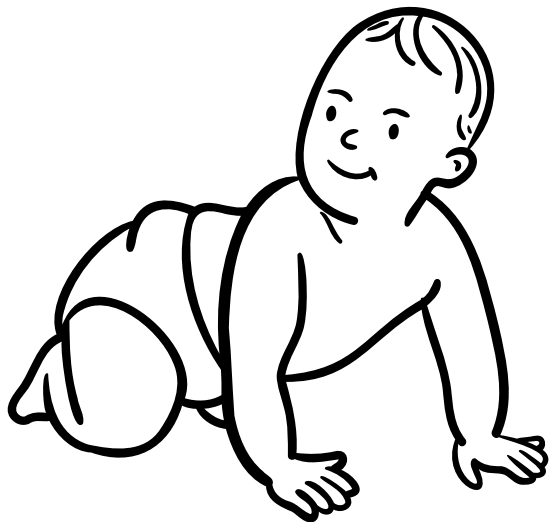
# RSV maternal vaccine video

Click [here](#) to watch, share or embed this RSV maternal vaccine video with VACCHO on your channels.



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# RSV infants and young children – key messages

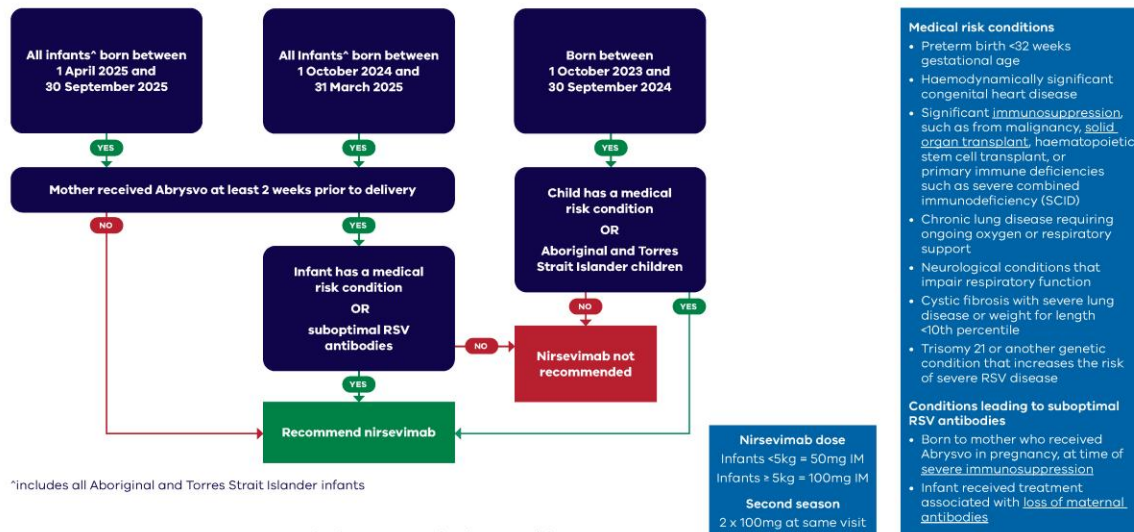


- From 1 April to 30 September 2025, free immunisation is available to Aboriginal infants entering their **first and second** respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) seasons.
- RSV is a common virus that can cause serious lung infections in babies, especially in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bubs who are at greater risk.
- Just one dose of infant RSV immunisation gives immediate protection for at least five months, right through the winter season when RSV is most active in Victoria.
- You can access the RSV infant immunisation program through participating public and private birthing hospitals, general practices, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and some local council immunisation clinics.
- Protect your bub and check their eligibility today <https://go.vic.gov.au/3Yc5IYR>

# RSV Infant program – decision aid

## Respiratory Syncytial Virus Mother and Infant Protection Program (RSV-MIPP) 2025

Decision aid to determine if a newborn or child up to 24 months is eligible to receive nirsevimab under the Victorian RSV-MIPP 2025



\*includes all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants

# RSV Fact sheets

## RSV vaccination during pregnancy - Abrysvo®

Information for consumers

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### What is respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)?

Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common virus that can cause respiratory infections from mild colds to severe illnesses. It affects people of all ages, but especially infants and young children.

RSV is easily spread, and most children will get an RSV infection by the time they are 2 years old. In Australia, RSV infection is the most common cause of infant hospitalisation because it can often progress to pneumonia (infection of the lungs) or bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lungs) in very young children.

Those at greatest risk for serious RSV disease include:

- infants under 6 months of age, especially those under 3 months
- infants and young children aged 2 years and under with certain medical risk conditions for severe RSV disease
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 2 years and under.

### Why should I get the RSV vaccine in pregnancy?

Maternal vaccination is the safest means of protecting infants and children against RSV.

When the Abrysvo® RSV vaccine is given in pregnancy, the mother will create protective antibodies and pass these to their baby through the placenta. This helps to protect their newborn baby from birth and in its first few months of life. Immunisation in pregnancy reduces the risk of severe RSV illness in infants under 6 months of age by around 70%.

### Is Abrysvo® RSV vaccine free under the National Immunisation Program?

Eligible women from 28 to 36 weeks of pregnancy will be able to access free Abrysvo® RSV vaccine through the National Immunisation Program (NIP) from February 2025. To get access to free NIP vaccines you must hold, or be eligible for, a Medicare card.

Some providers might charge a fee for giving the vaccine.

### How is the Abrysvo® RSV vaccine given?

A single dose of the Abrysvo® RSV vaccine, is recommended at the 28-week antenatal check, but can be given from 28 to 36 weeks of pregnancy. It is given by injection into the muscle, usually in the deltoid muscle of the upper arm.

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Fact sheet for pregnant women

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## RSV immunisation for infants and young children - nirsevimab

Information for parents and carers

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### What is respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)?

Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common virus that can cause respiratory infections from mild colds to severe illnesses. It affects people of all ages, but especially infants and young children.

RSV is easily spread, and most children will get an RSV infection by the time they are 2 years old. In Australia, RSV infection is the most common cause of infant hospitalisation because it can often progress to pneumonia (infection of the lungs) or bronchiolitis (inflammation of the small airways in the lungs) in very young children.

Those at greatest risk for serious RSV disease include:

- infants under 6 months of age, especially those under 3 months
- infants and young children aged 2 years and under with certain medical risk conditions for severe RSV disease
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants and young children aged 2 years and under.

### How can newborn babies get protected against RSV?

Newborn babies, the most at risk, can be protected from RSV through mothers being vaccinated during pregnancy. When the Abrysvo® RSV vaccine is given in pregnancy, the mother will create protective antibodies and pass these to their baby through the placenta. This helps to protect their newborn baby from birth and in its first few months of life. Immunisation in pregnancy reduces the risk of severe RSV illness in infants under 6 months of age by around 70%.

For infants whose mothers didn't receive RSV vaccination in pregnancy or who have risk factors for severe disease, the RSV immunisation product nirsevimab is available in Victoria.

### What is nirsevimab?

Nirsevimab (Beyfortus™) is a monoclonal antibody given to provide protection against RSV infection. Monoclonal antibodies start working within a couple of days and provide direct protection to the infant almost immediately after they are given.

Nirsevimab can provide protection against RSV for at least 5 months, reducing the risk of RSV-associated hospitalisation by almost 80 per cent among infants entering their first RSV season.



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Fact sheet for infants and young children

[Download](#)

## **Section 3.2a: Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)**

### **PSRACS and Aboriginal Community Controlled Residential Aged Care Services**

# Information available for RSV for older Australians

Administration of RSV vaccines and monoclonal antibodies by age group or cohort				
Age group or cohort	RSV vaccines for adults		RSV monoclonal antibodies for infants	
	Abrysvo® 0.5mL (Pfizer) 	Arexvy® 0.5 mL (GSK) 	Beyfortus™ (Nirsevimab) 0.5 mL (Purple) (Sanofi) 	Beyfortus™ (Nirsevimab) 1 mL (Blue) (Sanofi) 
Women from 28 weeks pregnancy	NIP FUNDED	DO NOT USE	DO NOT USE	DO NOT USE
Infants & children ≤24 months	DO NOT USE	DO NOT USE	STATE & TERRITORY FUNDED	STATE & TERRITORY FUNDED
Adults 60-74 years Adults with medical conditions that increase risk of severe RSV	AVAILABLE PRIVATELY BASED ON CLINICAL DECISION	AVAILABLE PRIVATELY BASED ON CLINICAL DECISION	DO NOT USE	DO NOT USE
Adults ≥75 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ≥60 years	AVAILABLE PRIVATELY BASED ON CLINICAL DECISION	NIP FUNDED	DO NOT USE	DO NOT USE

**Note:** NIP FUNDED indicates vaccine is NIP funded. DO NOT USE indicates product is NOT recommended for that group. STATE & TERRITORY FUNDED indicates funded under a state and territory program. AVAILABLE PRIVATELY indicates product only available through private prescription and is not funded. For further information including dosage and administration, refer to the Australian Immunisation Handbook chapter – [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\)](#).

## More information:

- [Advice for health professionals](#)
- [Consumer fact sheet](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- [RSV vaccine and monoclonal antibody poster \(as left\)](#)

## **Section 4: COVID-19**

# COVID-19 – Key messages - vaccination

COVID remains a part of our lives and right now we're experiencing an increase in cases across Victoria.

Immunity from COVID-19 vaccinations reduces over time.

Regular COVID-19 vaccinations (also known as boosters) are the best way to maintain your protection against severe illness, hospitalisation and death from COVID-19.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access COVID-19 vaccines free from ACCHOs.**

Booster vaccination are recommended based on age and immunocompromise.

## Booster dose recommendations

	Less than 5 years	5 to 17 years	18 to 64 years	65 to 74 years	75 years and older
<b>Without severe immunocompromise</b>	Not recommended	Not recommended	Eligible for a dose every 12 months	Recommended every 12 months and eligible for a dose every 6 months	Recommended every 6 months
<b>With severe immunocompromise</b>	Not recommended	Eligible for a dose every 12 months	Recommended every 12 months and eligible for a dose every 6 months	Recommended every 12 months and eligible for a dose every 6 months	Recommended every 6 months

## Immunity

Book your  
vaccination today

Community . Unity . Immunity



For more information, visit [COVID-19 vaccine advice and recommendations](#).

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# COVID-19 – Key messages – antiviral treatment

Discuss what to do if you get sick with COVID-19 with your GP, including testing options and whether you are eligible for antiviral treatment.

Oral antiviral medicines may help stop a COVID-19 infection from becoming severe, with treatments having shown to reduce the chance of a person requiring admission to hospital for treatment and severe illness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who test positive to COVID-19 and meet one of the following criteria may be eligible for COVID-19 oral antiviral treatment:

- 18 years of age or older with moderate to severe immunocompromise or have been previously hospitalised from COVID-19 and subsequently re-infected.
- 30 years of age or older with one risk factor for developing severe disease.
- 70 years of age or older regardless of risk factors and with or without symptoms.

For more information, visit [COVID-19 Vaccination and Antiviral Treatments](#)

## **Section 5: Vaccination myth and facts**

# Supporting conversations about vaccination

+ THIS RESOURCE IS FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR USE WITH ADULTS



## Talking with adult patients who have questions

This guide aims to support you to have conversations with adult patients who have questions and concerns about vaccinations. There are two goals for these conversations: to increase your patient's confidence in the vaccine, and to vaccinate.



### MORE INFO

For a brief summary, see the quick guide at [skai.org.au/healthcare-professionals](https://skai.org.au/healthcare-professionals).

This [downloadable fact sheet](#), is based on the SKAI communications approach. It will help you have productive conversations with adults about vaccination.

+ THIS RESOURCE IS FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

CONVERSATION GUIDE



## Addressing vaccine misinformation

This guide aims to support you as a healthcare professional to address vaccine misinformation. Use these evidence-based steps<sup>1</sup> to address misinformation (described in Step 4).



### MORE INFO

For a brief summary, see the quick guide at [skai.org.au/healthcare-professionals](https://skai.org.au/healthcare-professionals).

This [fact sheet](#) can be used in conjunction with the SKAI communications approach.

## **Section 6: Alternative care pathways**

# Urgent care services: key messages

- If you need urgent healthcare now, but it's not life-threatening, get free help faster with Victoria's Urgent Care Services.
- Victoria's range of Urgent Care Services offer free help faster. Whether it's day or night, weekday or weekend, you can find the right urgent care you need now.
- You can choose to get urgent care in three ways
  - Walk into an [Urgent Care Clinic](#), open late and on weekends
  - Video call with [Virtual Emergency Department 24/7](#)
  - Phone [1300 60 60 24 Nurse-on-Call 24/7](#)
- You do not need a referral from your GP, an appointment or a Medicare card to use the services.
- Victoria's Urgent Care Services are available across Victoria and are staffed by expert urgent care doctors and nurses.
- If you are in a life-threatening situation, call triple zero (000) or visit your nearest emergency department.
- To learn more about Victoria's other Urgent Care Services, visit [urgentcare.vic.gov.au](http://urgentcare.vic.gov.au)
- Factsheets are available in: [English](#), [Arabic](#), [Chinese simplified](#), [Chinese traditional](#), [Greek](#), [Italian](#), [Punjabi](#), [Turkish](#) and [Vietnamese](#).

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# Virtual Emergency Department

Need urgent healthcare now? Video call with the Virtual Emergency Department.

Virtual Emergency Department is a free, 24/7 service that connects you to an emergency doctor or nurse from your computer or mobile. Adults and children can access the service from anywhere in Victoria, as well as carers or clinicians in Aged Care and other healthcare settings.

You do not need a referral from your GP, an appointment or a Medicare card to use the service. To use the service all you need is a device with a camera (mobile phone, computer, laptop or tablet).

Register today, so that when you or a patient needs urgent care, it's only a video call away. Pre-register with the Virtual Emergency Department at [www.vved.org.au](http://www.vved.org.au). If you experience any issues with the registration form, please call 03 9485 9070.

If you are in a life-threatening situation, call triple zero (000) or visit your nearest emergency department.

To learn more about our Urgent Care Services Victoria, visit [urgentcare.vic.gov.au](http://urgentcare.vic.gov.au)



**Virtual Emergency Department**



- ✔ Free video call
- ✔ 24/7 service
- ✔ Easy to use
- ✔ No waiting in hospital emergency

Urgent Care **Services**  
Victoria



[Click to download VED communications kit](#)

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