

Ministry of Health

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Ministère de la Santé

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August 27, 2024

RE: Ontario's 2024-2025 Infant and High-risk Children RSV Prevention Program

Dear Health Care Provider/Health Care Setting,

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to protecting the health and well-being of our communities. As we approach the upcoming respiratory illness season, safeguarding vulnerable populations, particularly infants and high-risk children, is of great importance and is being optimized through prevention programming for Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). To strengthen our efforts to prevent RSV among infants and young children, I am pleased to share the details of Ontario's expanded RSV prevention program for the 2024-25 season. This implementation package will provide you with essential information to begin planning and preparing for the fall implementation of this important program.

RSV remains a significant cause of respiratory illness among infants and young children. During the 2022-23 respiratory season, Ontario saw 3,850 hospitalizations for RSV in children under two years old, with 538 cases requiring intensive care. While the previous targeted prevention program using palivizumab (Synagis) has been effective, we recognize the need to expand our efforts to reach and protect more infants, particularly those in marginalized and racialized communities.

For the 2024-25 RSV season, the Ministry will transition to an expanded infant RSV prevention program that will include all infants born during and outside of the RSV season and children under 2 years of age with high-risk medical conditions. This will involve transitioning from palivizumab (Synagis) to nirsevimab (Beyfortus), a monoclonal antibody that provides effective and sustained protection with a single dose. This change is expected to improve adherence and have a broader impact on infection through expansion of programming, particularly in communities with limited healthcare access.

Additionally, the RSVpre-F vaccine, Abrysvo, will be made available for pregnant individuals to protect newborns from RSV from birth until they are six months old. The infant product Beyfortus is the recommended approach for protection of infants per the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), with the vaccine in pregnancy being available on a case-by-case basis.

To ensure the success of the expanded RSV prevention program, it is crucial to leverage established relationships and networks within your communities. The administration of Beyfortus and Abrysvo will require multiple channels to reach eligible populations effectively. This includes hospital administration of Beyfortus to newborns during the RSV season before discharge, ensuring immediate protection for in-season births. Primary care providers and public health units will play a key role in administering the prophylaxis for out-of-season infants or those born outside the hospital system (e.g., home births). Additionally, pediatric specialists, primary care providers, and outpatient hospital clinics will be important in reaching infants up to two years of age who are at high risk for severe RSV disease during their second season.

We are confident that the expanded RSV prevention program will positively impact the health of infants and young children across Ontario. Your collaboration and support in implementing this program are invaluable, and we look forward to working closely with you to ensure its success.

For details and questions in your region contact your local public health unit. Please visit the Ministry of Health [health care provider website](#) for more information and resources about the RSV vaccine program.

Thank you once again for your dedication to protecting the health of infants, children, families and communities in Ontario.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kieran Moore', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kieran Michael Moore, MD, CCFP(EM), FCFP, MPH, DTM&H, FRCPC FCAHS
Chief Medical Officer of Health