

# Pointers For Parents-To-Be

## What to Know Now to Help Protect Your Newborn from RSV

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(NAPS)—When I first started my

career as a nurse practitioner, I saw pediatric wards fill each winter with children suffering from common infections that cause rotavirus diarrhea and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Since then and following the introduction of the rotavirus vaccine nearly two decades ago, hospital visits for rotavirus have notably decreased.

### Protecting Newborns Now

Today, we are in a similar position to help prevent RSV through a maternal vaccine given to protect infants at birth. Getting vaccinated while pregnant helps your body create protective antibodies that you can pass on to your baby. These antibodies can help protect your baby from diseases such as RSV during the first few months of life when they are most vulnerable.

While RSV can cause cold-like symptoms most of the time, it can be dangerous in infants and young children—and is the leading cause of infant hospitalization in the United States. RSV season usually starts in the fall and peaks in the winter in most regions, which is why the vaccine is typically given from September through January. Because the RSV vaccine is administered seasonally, the protection passed to the baby will last for their first RSV season.

The good news is that if you or a loved one is pregnant, the maternal RSV vaccine is available now at no out-of-pocket cost to you through almost all insurance plans, including Medicaid and employer-sponsored plans. You should receive the maternal RSV vaccine during weeks 32 through 36 of pregnancy if you are pregnant between September and January.

Vaccines have been recommended during pregnancy for decades and are our most effective tool against preventable respiratory diseases. They are also a critical part of routine prenatal care, adding an important line of defense



**You can protect your baby even before he or she is born by getting vaccinated against RSV while pregnant.**

against severe respiratory diseases that can leave pregnant people and their babies at an increased risk of complications. The maternal RSV vaccine can be administered during the same visit that you may receive other vaccines during pregnancy, including Tdap, flu, or COVID-19 vaccines.

All recommended vaccines are held to the highest standards of safety—meaning they are carefully studied and monitored for side effects. Having worked for 20 years in community health centers in underserved areas, I have witnessed firsthand the protection that maternal vaccinations provide. At one clinic, we even implemented a “cocooning” approach, vaccinating the entire family against flu to help protect newborns who are too young for vaccines. By ensuring the pregnant mother, father, siblings, and grandparents received their flu shots, we worked to minimize the risk of influenza spreading within families.

These days we can go a step further by providing early RSV protection to newborns during their first months of life. If you or a loved one is pregnant, ask your healthcare provider about the maternal RSV vaccine, along with other recommended maternal vaccines. Maternal vaccination is a powerful way to help strengthen your baby's immunity and share protection before they are even born.

### Learn More

For more information on maternal vaccines and their importance, visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy).