



Dear Parent,

## **PROTECTING YOUR NEW BABY FROM SERIOUS ILLNESS CAUSED BY RSV**

I am pleased to inform you that your infant may be eligible to be immunised against serious illness caused by respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) through the Western Australia (WA) RSV Infant and Maternal Immunisation Program.

RSV is easily spread, and most babies will get infected by the virus during their first year of life. While many babies will recover from their illness within two weeks, RSV infection can be serious. In fact, RSV is the most common cause of infant hospitalisation in Australia and each winter more than 1,000 infants in WA are hospitalised due to RSV. RSV infection early in life can also lead to longer term health issues, such as childhood asthma.

In early February this year, the WA RSV Infant and Maternal Immunisation Program began offering a RSV vaccine, Abrysvo®, to pregnant women at 28 weeks of pregnancy. Most infants whose mothers received an Abrysvo vaccination during pregnancy will not need any further protection against RSV.

If you did not receive an Abrysvo® vaccination during your most recent pregnancy, your newborn can still be protected from RSV by receiving an immunisation called Beyfortus®. Beyfortus® is not a vaccine, but rather a medicine that contains antibodies which prevent the RSV virus from spreading within the body. Beyfortus® is administered by injection and can be given at the same visit with childhood immunisations.

Last year, more than 24,000 children in WA received Beyfortus®. An assessment at Perth Children's Hospital found that Beyfortus® was 88 per cent effective at preventing infants from being hospitalised with RSV and that more than 500 infant hospitalisations were prevented.

The winter RSV season is underway. If you did **not** receive an Abrysvo® vaccination during your most recent pregnancy and your newborn did **not** receive Beyfortus® before they left the birthing hospital, I urge you to discuss with your child's immunisation provider to arrange for them to get protected from serious illness caused by RSV. Beyfortus® is available through General Practices, Community Health Clinics and Aboriginal Medical Services throughout WA. If you received Abrysvo® during pregnancy but your baby was born less than 2 weeks after the vaccination, you should talk to your doctor about getting Beyfortus® for your infant.

Your child's immunisation provider can tell you more about Beyfortus®. Information about the WA RSV Infant Immunisation Program, including a fact sheet called "What parents and carers need to know", is also available on the WA Department of Health website at <https://www.health.wa.gov.au/rsvimmunisation>.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Robertson  
**CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER**  
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