

INFORMATION PAPER

DHA-IHD
14 Aug 2023

SUBJECT: Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

1. Purpose. To describe Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) disease and the vaccines to prevent it.
2. Facts.
 - a. Microbiology. RSV disease is caused by the Respiratory Syncytial Virus. RSV is a single-stranded RNA virus. The virus causes cells to fuse with neighboring cells, creating multinucleated (single cells containing multiple nuclei). This can lead to severe respiratory illness, including RSV-associated lower respiratory tract disease (LRTD).
 - b. Disease. RSV in adults generally produces mild or no symptoms. Symptoms are generally consistent with an upper respiratory infection which can include rhinorrhea, pharyngitis, cough, headache, fatigue, and fever. It generally lasts about 5 days. Some adults, however, may have more severe symptoms consistent with a lower respiratory tract infection, such as pneumonia. People 60 and older with certain chronic conditions are at the highest risk of severe RSV disease.
 - c. Epidemiology. The virus that causes RSV is usually transmitted by direct contact with contaminated secretions. This may occur by exposure to droplets from an infected person when they cough or sneeze in close proximity, generally < 6 feet. Transmission is also possible through contact with secretions on surfaces and then touching the eyes, nose, or mouth. RSV can remain on hard surfaces for several hours and on surfaces for a shorter amount of time. Transmission can occur 1 to 2 days prior to symptoms until about 8 days after showing signs of illness. The incubation period ranges from 2 to 8 days but 4 to 6 days is most common.
 - d. Vaccines. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that individuals 60 years may receive a single dose of RSV vaccine using shared clinical decision-making, to help prevent lower respiratory tract disease (LRTD) caused by RSV.
 - (1) The Abrysvo vaccine is a bivalent, recombinant protein subunit vaccine. It is indicated for prevention of lower respiratory tract

disease (LRTD) caused by RSV in individuals aged 60 years and older and it is received as a single dose.

(2) The Arexvy vaccine is an adjuvanted, monovalent, recombinant subunit vaccine. It is indicated for preventions of lower respiratory tract disease (LRTD) caused by RSV in individuals aged 60 years and older and it is received as a single dose.

- e. Immunization. The CDC recommends adults aged 60 years and may receive a single dose of RSV vaccine, using shared clinical decision-making. Neither vaccine is recommended over the other.
- f. Precautions. RSV vaccination should be delayed for persons experiencing moderate to severe illness with or without fever. The RSV vaccine is contraindicated and should not be administered to individuals with a history of severe allergic reaction, such as anaphylaxis, to any component of the vaccine.
- g. Adverse Events. The most common side effects of the immunization are local reactions: injection site pain, redness, and swelling and systemic reactions: fatigue, fever, headache, nausea, diarrhea, muscle pain and/or joint pain. Rarely, serious neurologic conditions, including Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS), have been reported.
- h. DoD Policy. The DoD follows the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) for routine, age, or condition-specific vaccine recommendations. The RSV vaccine is included in ACIP immunization recommendations utilizing shared clinical decision-making.

3. References.

- a. CDC. Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for Use of Respiratory Syncytial Virus Vaccines in Older Adults. MMWR, July 21, 2023/72(29); 793-801.
- b. American Society for Microbiology. Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), Tis the Season. December 6, 2022.
<https://asm.org/Articles/2022/December/Respiratory-Syncytial-Virus-RSV-Tis-the-Season>

Central Region Vaccine Safety Hub
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