



DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM
www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

How Palivizumab Can Protect Infants With Down Syndrome From RSV

Palivizumab is a vaccine given to some babies to protect them from respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). In this handout, you will learn about the vaccine and how it can protect your baby from RSV.

WHAT IS PALIVIZUMAB?

Palivizumab (also called Synagis®) is an injection that helps protect infants who have a higher chance of developing complications (other medical issues) from RSV.

HOW OFTEN DO BABIES RECEIVE PALIVIZUMAB INJECTIONS?

The injection is given once every 30 days during RSV season (November through April). In most cases, 5 injections are enough to protect babies from RSV.

ARE PALIVIZUMAB INJECTIONS ONLY FOR CERTAIN BABIES?

Palivizumab injections are typically given to babies and children up to age 6 who have a higher chance of developing complications from RSV. Your baby's care team can talk with you about whether Palivizumab is right for your baby.

Did You Know...?

Your baby might need more than a diagnosis of Down syndrome to receive the RSV vaccine. Please speak with the care team about what else your baby might need to receive the vaccine.

WHAT IS RSV?

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a virus (germ) that causes the most common infections of the lungs and respiratory tract (passage through which air passes while breathing, which includes the mouth, nose, throat and lungs). RSV can spread through the air or through droplets when someone with RSV coughs or sneezes.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR RSV?

There are a few risk factors that can raise a baby's chance of catching RSV. The risk factors include:

- A diagnosis of Down syndrome
- Infants who are less than 24 months old
- Preterm infants who are born at or before 29 weeks
- Preterm infants who are born at or before 32 weeks and with chronic lung disease (CLD)
- Infants with Congenital Heart Disease (CHD)
- Infants with anatomic pulmonary abnormalities (differences in how their lungs look or work) or certain neuromuscular disorders (disorders that affect the nerves and muscles)

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF RSV?

Most RSV symptoms appear 4-6 days after a person is exposed to the virus. Symptoms depend on how severe the RSV infection becomes.

Common symptoms include:

- Short, shallow and rapid breathing
- Cough
- Poor feeding
- Unusual tiredness (lethargy)
- Irritability
- In babies and young children, you might notice their chest muscles and skin pull inward with each breath. This is a sign that they are struggling to breath

Severe symptoms include:

- Fever
- Severe cough
- Wheezing (high-pitched noise usually heard when breathing out)
- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- Cyanosis (blue color of the skin from lack of oxygen)

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Down Syndrome Program

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