

RSV: The little-known jab that could keep over 75s out of hospital this winter.

There's a winter virus which can be much more serious for those aged 75 and over. It's a major cause of respiratory illness in the UK, often starting like a simple cold, but can quickly lead to pneumonia, breathing problems and even hospital stays in those who are most vulnerable.

What many people don't realise is that the NHS now offers a vaccine that protects against this virus. It's a newer offer for older adults, which is why you may not have heard much about it yet. But it can make a real difference to staying well and staying independent.

What's the virus?

The virus is called RSV which stands for Respiratory Syncytial Virus. It spreads easily through coughs and sneezes and can hit older lungs much harder than expected. In over 75's it can cause pneumonia and flare-ups of existing lung disease and other long-term conditions. It causes around 9,000 hospitalisations in those aged over 75 in the UK each year.

Why this vaccine matters:

The RSV vaccine can help protect you. A single dose:

- helps boosts protection for a few years
- helps prevent pneumonia
- reduces the risk of hospital stays
- supports staying active and independent

A GP's view:

"RSV can be more serious in older adults than many people realise. Vaccination offers important protection against severe illness, including complications such as pneumonia. By reducing your risk of infection, it may also help protect those around you, including babies and young children, who can be particularly vulnerable to RSV. If you are aged 75 or over, I would strongly encourage you to take up the offer of vaccination this winter." - Dr Rob Weaver, GP and Deputy Chief Medical Officer, NHS Somerset

How to get the vaccine

The NHS is offering the RSV vaccine to people aged 75-79 and those who turned 80 years old after 1 September 2024. It is also being offered to pregnant women, as it protects newborn babies during their first months of life.

Your GP surgery will contact you to offer you an RSV vaccination appointment if you are eligible. Don't worry if you haven't heard from them, over 75's can contact their GP to book a vaccination.

If you or a family member is 75 or over, please make time to get protected. A small jab now can help keep you out of hospital later.

More information on RSV:

- Signs and symptoms: [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) - NHS](#)
- Guide for older adults: [Your guide to the RSV vaccine for older adults - GOV.UK](#)

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