



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 during their first year of life. While many babies will recover from their illness within a week or two, 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.

Fortunately, a new medicine, called Beyfortus®, has proven to be highly effective at protecting infants from severe RSV illness. 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 received Beyfortus® through the WA RSV Infant Immunisation Program. 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 fast approaching and now is the time to make sure that your infant is protected from serious illness and hospitalisation caused by RSV. Beyfortus® is available through General Practices, Community Health Clinics and Aboriginal Medical Services throughout WA.

In most of WA, the RSV season typically begins in May each year, so I urge you to contact your preferred immunisation provider to discuss with them. RSV circulates year-round in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions and if you live in one of these two regions your baby may have already been given Beyfortus® at birth; you should discuss with your baby's health care provider if you are unsure.

Your baby's immunisation provider can tell you more about RSV illness and 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

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