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WHO outlines recommendations to protect infants against RSV

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The position paper outlines WHO recommendations for two immunisation products



The World Health Organization (WHO) has published its first-ever position paper on immunisation products to protect infants against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) – the leading cause of acute lower respiratory infections in children globally.

Every year, RSV causes about 100 000 deaths and over 3.6 million hospitalizations in children under the age of 5 years worldwide. About half of these deaths occur in infants younger than 6 months of age. The vast majority (97%) of RSV deaths in infants occur in low- and middle-income countries where there is limited access to supportive medical care, such as oxygen or hydration.

Published in the Weekly Epidemiological Record (WER), the position paper outlines WHO recommendations for two immunisation products: a maternal vaccine RSVpreF that can be given to pregnant women in their third trimester to protect their infant and a long-acting monoclonal antibody nirsevimab that can be administered to infants from birth, just before or during the RSV season. WHO recommends that infants receive a single dose of nirsevimab right after birth or before being discharged from a birthing facility. If not administered at birth, the monoclonal antibody can be given during the baby's first health visit.

Both products were recommended by the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation (SAGE) for global implementation in September 2024. In addition, the maternal vaccine received WHO prequalification in March 2025, allowing it to be purchased by UN agencies.