

# Future parents more likely to get RSV vaccine when pregnant if aware RSV can be a serious illness in infants: Study

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A nationwide survey of people who were pregnant or trying to become pregnant has found that overall, 54% expressed interest in the RSV vaccine during pregnancy. Perceiving RSV as a serious illness in infants

was the strongest predictor of likely vaccination during pregnancy. Likelihood to receive the RSV vaccine during pregnancy was also higher among parents with a child at home already.

The findings are published in the journal *Pediatrics*.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a leading cause of infection among [infants](#), frequently resulting in hospital or intensive care admission. RSV infection severe enough to require hospitalization has been associated with long-term wheezing and higher risk of future hospitalization for asthma symptoms compared with children not hospitalized with RSV as infants. Almost all children in the United States will contract RSV within the first two years of life.

RSV vaccination during pregnancy has been demonstrated to help prevent RSV-related hospitalizations in infants. The [vaccine](#) is now FDA approved and recommended during pregnancy.

"Our study was conducted prior to the RSV vaccine approval, with the goal to use the findings to inform educational efforts on the new recommendations," said lead author Jennifer Kusma Saper, MD, MS, researcher at Mary Ann & J. Milburn Smith Child Health Outcomes, Research and Evaluation Center at Stanley Manne Children's Research Institute, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

"Research results on the [vaccine effectiveness](#) also were not publicly available at the time of the survey. Raising awareness of RSV infection as likely and potentially serious for [young children](#), especially for infants under 6 months, and that it can be prevented with a vaccine during pregnancy, may help promote RSV vaccine uptake," Saper added.

The study included a diverse and representative sample of 1,528 participants. Overall, 40% of respondents perceived that RSV illness among children is both serious and likely, whereas 45% perceived RSV illness as serious but not likely, and 16% did not view RSV illness as serious. Twenty percent said they had never heard of RSV.

Sixty-three percent of respondents who thought that RSV illness was both serious and likely reported they would be very likely to get vaccinated against RSV during pregnancy, while only 31% of those who thought RSV illness was not serious (regardless of whether they thought it was likely) would do so.

"Our findings clearly show that in order to increase RSV vaccination during [pregnancy](#) and spare infants from potentially severe infection, future parents need to be well informed about the serious risks RSV may pose to their child," said Dr. Saper.

**More information:** *Pediatrics* (2024).

Provided by Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

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