



Well into the Future: Protecting the Health of Older Generations

What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a virus that can cause an infection in the lungs and airways (breathing passages), producing symptoms that are often similar to a mild cold.^{1,2}

While the typical recovery from RSV is one to two weeks, it can cause severe complications in adults over the age of 65. These complications can include pneumonia and the worsening of underlying conditions such as COPD and Heart Disease.³ The global aging population further increases the challenges associated with RSV. Older adults are particularly susceptible due to age-related immune decline⁴ and the presence of comorbidities, and this demographic shift is expected to exacerbate the burden on healthcare systems⁵.

The National Immunisation Committee (NIAC) has recommended that all adults aged over 65 should be vaccinated against RSV.⁶

At a Glance

- RSV is a respiratory virus that, despite being very common, can cause severe complications in adults over the age of 65.
- Analysis of hospitalisation trends for this season, shows that the percentage of patients hospitalised with RSV admitted to ICU align closely to those with Influenza (Flu).⁷
- The number of older people in Ireland is predicted to grow significantly in the years ahead. There has been a 26% increase in the number of adults over 65 in Ireland since 2021 and this is predicted to exceed 1 million by the end of this decade.⁸
- Ireland's National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) recommends RSV vaccination for everyone 65 years and older, especially those in long-term care or with serious health conditions.

Ipsos B&A Research Findings

A new study commissioned by Pfizer from Ipsos B&A⁹ has found that awareness of RSV is very low among older adults and their carers, despite being the cohort who face a higher risk of serious illness from RSV.

- RSV has an awareness issue in Ireland, with just 18% of respondents claiming to know a lot about the condition, potentially putting vulnerable groups at risk.
- Two in five (41%) have either never heard of RSV or have only ever heard the name.
- There is a significantly higher level of awareness about Flu and Covid.
- While age is a key risk factor for RSV, just one in four respondents who care for an older adult indicated that they know a lot about RSV.
- Despite limited knowledge of RSV, 76% of respondents who care for older adults would be concerned if they were to contract an infection.
- While awareness of the existence of RSV vaccines is low at just 18% there is strong support for them, with 85% of people believing they should be free of charge if available.

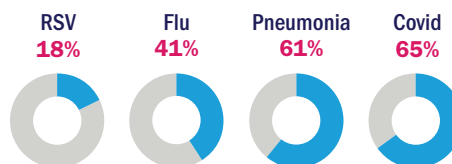
Awareness of RSV



One in eight (12%) have never even heard of RSV. Two in five (29%) just know the name



Just 1 in 4 carers know a lot about RSV



Awareness of respiratory illnesses

Risks for Older Adults



67% of carers recognise that people 65+ are at greater risks



76% of carers worry about older adults catching RSV

Protection against RSV



68% suggest good hand hygiene



57% disinfecting surfaces



56% avoid touching eyes/nose/mouth with unwashed hands



53% suggest using masks or limit contact with people who have an RSV infection



30% suggest immunising older adults



29% suggest immunising babies against RSV

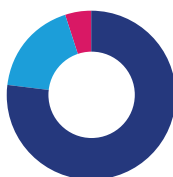


15% don't know



12% say they don't take any steps to avoid getting sick

Awareness of the vaccine



- 77% of adults are not sure/don't know if there is an RSV vaccine with just under one in five believing that there may be a vaccine.
- 18% are aware of the vaccine
- 5% believe there is not a vaccine.

Endnotes

- 1 Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv>. Updated July 22, 2022. Accessed February 21, 2024.
- 2 About RSV. Respiratory syncytial virus infection (RSV). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/about/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/about/symptoms.html. Updated August 16, 2023. Accessed February 21, 2024.
- 3 RSV in adults. American Lung Association. <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/rsv/rsv-in-adults>. Updated January 9, 2023. Accessed February 21, 2024.
- 4 Kaler, J.; Hussain, A.; Patel, K.; Hernandez, T.; Ray, S. Respiratory syncytial virus: A comprehensive review of transmission, pathophysiology, and manifestation. Cureus 2023, 15, e36342.
- 5 Kim, T.; Choi, S.H. Epidemiology and disease burden of respiratory syncytial virus infection in adults. Infect. Chemother. 2024, 56, 1.
- 6 NIAC recommendation on RSV Vaccines is available here: https://www.nitag-resource.org/resources/niac-recommendations-passive-immunisation-and-vaccination-against-respiratory-syncytial?utm_source
- 7 Analysis of HSPC data from week 40 2024 to week 20 2025 demonstrates 3.7% of patients admitted to hospital with Flu and 3.6% of patients admitted to hospital RSV required ICU care. See <https://respiratorydisease-hpscireland.hub.arcgis.com/pages/rsv>
- 8 Central Statistics Office, Older Persons Information Hub August 2025, <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatest-news/pressreleases/2025pressreleases/pressstatement-olderpersonsinformationhubaugust2025/?utm>

Research Methodology

- 9 Ipsos B&A designed and implemented a research project for the Pfizer involving a nationally representative sample of n=1,493 adults in a caregiver roles, those who have one or both parents over 65 years old, adults responsible for or who have an older relative in a nursing/care home and those over the age of 65 years old themselves. In order to achieve a large enough representative sample of the relevant interest groups the survey was included on two of our nationally representative omnibus services and was in field between 12th – 23rd June and 26th June – 7th July 2025. Each omnibus survey is quota-controlled by various demographic factors – gender, age, social class, region and area- and corrective weighting is applied in line with the latest Census figures to ensure a representative sample. Ipsos B&A has strict quality control measures in place to ensure robust and reliable findings. The study explored perceptions and experiences with RSV, comparing these to views on flu, pneumonia, and COVID-19.

Endnotes