Infant RSV Program at PRHC

For parents and expectant parents

Peterborough Regional Health Centre (PRHC) provides a Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) preventative antibody immunization to all newborns born at PRHC between October and April to protect against serious illness caused by RSV.

What is RSV?

RSV is a major cause of respiratory illness that affects the airway and lungs, especially in babies and young children.

RSV often causes cold-like symptoms, and is the most common cause of a chest infection called bronchiolitis. Babies and young children often have mild illness from RSV and recover quickly. Some babies and young children may develop a severe infection that leads to hospitalization and can be life-threatening.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

Symptoms of RSV are similar to those of a cold, flu or COVID-19. They include:

- Cough
- Runny nose
- Fever
- Drinking or eating less
- Low energy
- Wheezing
- Irritability in children

If your child is having trouble breathing, is dehydrated, or their symptoms are getting worse, seek medical attention immediately.

How is RSV spread?

RSV is very contagious and spreads the same way as a common cold by:

- Touching droplets containing the virus after someone coughs or sneezes
- Being close to someone with the infection who is coughing or sneezing

After exposure to the virus, it can take two (2) to eight (8) days before becoming sick. People with the virus are usually contagious for three (3) to eight (8) days.

PRHC's healthcare team provides an antibody immunization for RSV to all babies born at PRHC between October and April.

Speak with a member of your care team if you have questions about the RSV medication. If you decline the newborn RSV immunization, but change your mind at a later date, please reach out to your nurse practitioner or family doctor or call Lakelands Public Health.

How can I protect my infant/child from RSV?

There are now safe and effective ways to keep your child from getting RSV. They include:

- A preventive antibody immunization that is given to a newborn
- A vaccine that is given to a pregnant person

PRHC is providing a preventive antibody immunization. This is the recommended course of action for all newborns born between October and April.

Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends the antibody medication to be given to a child as the preferred form of protection against RSV. This recommendation is based on how well the preventive antibody medication works, how long it provides protection, and how safe it is.

Who else qualifies for the RSV preventive antibody medication?

Children up to 24 months of age who are considered high-risk can receive the preventive antibody medication through PRHC's Pediatric Outpatient (POP) Clinic. If you are unsure whether your child is eligible, contact your healthcare provider.

Newborns not born at PRHC can receive the RSV immunization by making an appointment through Lakelands Public Health or Peterborough Family Health Team. Immunization will be provided based on available supply.

Learn more **here** or speak with your family physician, nurse practitioner or obstetrical care provider for more information.