



MEDIA ADVISORY FROM HEALTHCARE READY

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Special note to journalists: [Julie Abrams](#) Healthcare Ready’s associate director of programs and response, is available to serve as a subject matter expert. Please contact Laura Perillo to request an interview.

Healthcare Ready is on alert for a pediatric surge in respiratory illness and shortages of RSV vaccine in infants

Vulnerable populations, including children from lower-income or underserved communities may be disproportionately affected

WASHINGTON (Oct. 31, 2023) Last fall, the surge of three respiratory viruses — RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), the flu (influenza) and COVID-19 — commonly referred to as the “triple-demic” [killed more than 100,000 people in the U.S.](#) This year the triple-demic viruses are in play again and for the first time, immunizations exist to combat all three. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued a [health advisory](#) about the limited supply of nirsevimab — the a long-acting monoclonal antibody immunization product recommended for preventing RSV-associated lower respiratory tract disease in infants.

[Healthcare Ready](#) — a nonprofit dedicated to ensuring patient access to health care in times of disasters — is actively on alert and monitoring the [pediatric surge of respiratory illness](#) and the shortage of nirsevimab. Healthcare Ready is also coordinating support to help address this drug shortage while sharing tips with the public and reflecting on [lessons learned from last year’s triple-demic](#).

“During a triple-demic, children face heightened infection risks, potential healthcare resource shortages, disrupted routine care and psychosocial challenges,” said Julie Abrams, associate director of programs and response at Healthcare Ready, who has more than 15 years of experience in the pediatric healthcare supply chain.

“Preparedness means prioritizing vaccinations, expanding telehealth, and ensuring mental health support is accessible so we emerge stronger and more resilient. Preparedness also involves surge capacity planning, stockpiling pediatric supplies and fostering interagency collaboration to protect the most vulnerable patients in challenging times. Additionally, vulnerable populations, including children from lower-income or underserved communities, may be disproportionately affected during a tripledemic. Health disparities can be further exacerbated, as access to healthcare and resources may be limited,” she said.

Much of the population of medically underserved communities (communities of color, older adults, those who live in rural areas, unhouse individuals and low-income communities) experience greater barriers to healthcare and suffer worse health conditions because of inequitable access and disparate distribution of healthcare resources. They also rely on Medicaid for health insurance coverage. The end of the COVID-19 public health emergency triggered a Medicaid unwinding, resulting in at least [5.3 million Americans](#) completely losing coverage since April 2023. Because of this lack of insurance, a higher percentage of patients may delay seeking care for mild symptoms and seek care at hospitals at a more severe stage of illness.

[Infants](#) are extremely vulnerable to severe RSV infections, and along with children face additional challenges in obtaining access to healthcare. This is likely to be exacerbated as children account for more than 1 million of those disenrolled from Medicaid. Managing illnesses in children and infants requires specialized staffing and equipment. In regions without access to sufficient pediatric providers and pediatric healthcare equipment, illness surges in infants and children may become more common and be harder to manage.

The [RSV vaccine is recommended](#) for the following groups:

- People who are 32-36 weeks pregnant to protect their babies from severe RSV. The RSV vaccine is recommended for seasonal use: in the continental U.S. this is September through January. The seasonality of RSV season can vary, so state, local or territorial health departments may recommend different timing for administration for each area.
- In August 2023, the CDC recommended the RSV vaccine to protect babies and some toddlers from severe RSV during the RSV season.
- In July 2023, the CDC recommended the [RSV vaccine](#) for adults ages 60 and over, using [shared clinical decision-making](#). This means these individuals should talk to their healthcare provider about whether RSV vaccination is appropriate for them at this time.

Abrams said that communicating important public health information to parents, caregivers, and children during a tripledemic is crucial.

“Clear and accurate messaging can help mitigate the spread and encourage preventive measures. There may be a need for vaccination campaigns targeting multiple diseases. Ensuring vaccine supply, distribution and administration to pediatric populations can be a logistical challenge,” she said.

Healthcare Ready assists in coordinating public and private partners, including federal agencies involved in disaster response, state emergency operations centers, and health systems — hospitals, clinics, and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) — to assess health care needs and impacts by:

- Connecting needs and resources between nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), nonprofits, and shelters for supplies/medicines, and donations
- Assessing potential risks to critical infrastructure and health care supply chains
- Sharing resources and state-specific information to assist health care facilities, communities, and individuals
- Intelligence gathering and situational reporting

For the most recent updates about the surge in pediatric respiratory viruses, please see Healthcare Ready's newly redesigned website at healthcareready.org.

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About Healthcare Ready

[Healthcare Ready](http://healthcareready.org) is a nonprofit organization established in 2007 to help strengthen the U.S. healthcare system and assist communities in planning for, responding to, and recovering from disasters and disease pandemics. It serves as a linkage point between industry, and local, state, and federal governments to help build resilient communities and safeguard patients before, during, and after public health emergencies. For more information, visit healthcareready.org or on Twitter [@HC_Ready](https://twitter.com/HC_Ready).