

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Ambulance Services



Wednesday, 2 October 2024

## PROTECTING VICTORIAN NEWBORNS AND INFANTS NEXT WINTER

The Allan Labor Government is protecting Victorian newborns and infants from Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) next winter as part of a free hybrid immunisation program.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today announced \$18.7 million to deliver a new long-acting monoclonal antibody as part of a coordinated national prevention program for unprotected newborns and eligible infants up to eight months.

The free infant vaccine will complement an expected Commonwealth-funded maternal vaccine as part of the coordinated national program – ensuring as many babies are protected from RSV as possible.

The monoclonal antibody is a long-acting vaccine that will be available for Victorian babies and infants whose mother was unable to be immunised or was immunised less than two weeks before delivery.

The infant vaccine provides protection for about five months, which covers the winter peak of RSV infections from April to September.

A dedicated catch-up program will also be offered for eligible Victorian infants aged up to two years who are vulnerable to severe RSV and entering their second RSV season.

In most cases, immunisations will be administered in a hospital setting as part of standard post-birth care, helping parents avoid any additional healthcare costs and time spent attending appointments.

For the 2024 RSV season, Victoria secured doses of the antibody for infants and children at the most severe risk from the virus.

RSV is not new and can cause respiratory infections in the airways and lungs such as bronchiolitis, pneumonia – it is especially common in infants and young children, with most infected by the age of two years.

With more than 3,800 infant RSV-associated ED presentations in 2023/24 and approximately 85 per cent of those requiring a hospital admission, this vaccine will help reduce pressure on EDs and keep Victorian babies healthy.

For more information, please visit [betterhealth.vic.gov.au/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv](https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

*“We have worked closely with the Federal Government and other jurisdictions to ensure we can deliver a lifesaving RSV immunisation program for all eligible women and babies regardless of their postcode or bank balance.”*

*“We look forward to continuing to work with the Federal Government to ensure the National Immunisation Program is up to date and responds to newer forms of treatment such as monoclonal antibodies.”*