

Synagis (Palivizumab)

Synagis is a medicine called a monoclonal antibody. Monoclonal antibodies act like your body's own immune system to help fight off infections. The effects of Synagis last for one month.

What is Synagis used for?

Synagis is used to prevent severe illness in your child from a virus called respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

What is RSV?

RSV is a common virus that can affect the nose, throat, and lower lungs of all age groups. Almost all children are exposed to RSV by the time they are a toddler.

Illness from RSV can range from being very mild, to being very severe and needing to be hospitalized. RSV can cause bronchiolitis and pneumonia which can affect your child's ability to breathe.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

The symptoms start like a cold. Common symptoms include:

- Runny nose
- Decreased appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing
- Younger children may be more irritable, not as active, or have trouble breathing

How is RSV spread?

RSV is very contagious. Having contact with someone who has RSV (touching, kissing, or shaking hands) can spread RSV. The virus can also live on surfaces (i.e., countertops, door handles) for several hours.

RSV can also spread through the air by sneezing or coughing.

How can I prevent RSV infections?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You should also wash your hands:
 - After touching surfaces.
 - Before touching your face.
 - Before touching your child.
- Avoid contact with people who have cold or flu symptoms.
- Avoid crowded places during RSV season.
- Clean highly touched surfaces often.
- Always cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your upper arm.

Who should get Synagis?

We suggest that children who are at high risk of severe illness from RSV have a preventative treatment of Synagis. This includes children less than 2 years old who:

- Were born at 28 weeks gestation or less.
- Are getting treatment for bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD).
- Have certain types of congenital heart disease (CHD).
- Have certain neuromuscular or airway problems.

In most cases, your child will only need protection for one RSV season. There are some cases where we may suggest treatment for two RSV seasons.

What do I need to know about Synagis?

- Synagis is a medicine that is injected into the muscle (often the thigh).
- Your child will receive this treatment once a month (every 28-31 days) during RSV season. This likely equals five treatments (November-April in Wisconsin).
- Getting Synagis on time is very important to make sure your child is protected through RSV season.
- Synagis does not **prevent** your child from getting RSV, but it does decrease the chance that your child will be hospitalized from a severe case of RSV. If your child already has RSV, Synagis is not recommended as a treatment.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Your child should get Synagis within the correct time window each month. If your child is sick, the doctor's office may choose to not give the medicine. If this happens, schedule a new appointment as soon as you can.

Are there any side effects of Synagis?

There may be some side effects with this treatment. Common side effects include:

- Fever
- Redness or swelling at the injection site
- Cold symptoms

Call 911 if your child has any signs or symptoms of an allergic reaction, such as:

- Severe rash
- Trouble breathing
- Swelling of the mouth or face

Where do I get Synagis?

Synagis can be given by your child's primary care doctor in the office or by a home health nurse. If you receive Synagis at home, you will be given a prescription from a specialty pharmacy and a nurse will come give it. You must store Synagis in the fridge.

Does insurance cover Synagis?

Because Synagis is a new treatment, it can be expensive. Some insurance plans may not cover it. Talk to your insurance company or doctor's office to see if Synagis is an option for your child.

Who to Call

If you have questions about Synagis, talk to your child's provider or pharmacist.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 10/2021 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#8221.