

Media Release

Mr Danny Pearson MP

Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs

Minister for Finance



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STUDY TO DRIVE INCREASE IN RSV PROTECTION

The Allan Labor Government is backing a new study to boost the number of expectant mothers having the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) immunisation and investigate the impact of RSV infections in pregnancy.

Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs Danny Pearson today announced up to \$685,000 for Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) to explore the barriers surrounding the uptake of the RSV immunisation in pregnant women, aiming to boost trust and increase uptake – which will improve the health of our youngest Victorians.

The new *MCRI RSVChoice* study will complement MCRI's current investigation into the health outcomes for mothers and their babies associated with COVID-19 vaccinations during pregnancy.

RSV is a common, highly contagious virus that infects up to 90 per cent of children within the first two years of life. It is the most common cause of hospitalisation in infants – eight times higher than the number of influenza hospitalisations – because it can often progress to pneumonia or bronchiolitis in very young children.

RSV immunisation during pregnancy significantly reduces the risk of severe RSV illness in infants, with studies showing a reduction of around 70 per cent. Maternal RSV vaccination is safe for both the mother and baby and is recommended as a single dose during weeks 32-36 of pregnancy.

The Labor Government recently announced a free RSV immunisation program to protect around 40,000 Victorian babies born this RSV season – free for eligible families until 30 September. Infants aged two years and under are eligible if their mother hasn't been immunised during pregnancy.

The Government's record investment of more than \$1 billion in medical research has cemented Victoria as a global hub for medical research, driving incredible breakthroughs in treatment and patient care, this includes \$35 million to establish the Children's Cancer CoLab - supporting our youngest Victorians to get the best cancer care.

Quote attributable to Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs Danny Pearson

"We're supporting life-saving research to help us understand barriers in the uptake of RSV immunisation, boosting trust and supporting better coverage to protect babies, families, and communities."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"We know that RSV is the leading cause of hospitalisation in infants, that's why studies like these - along with our RSV mothers and babies immunisation protection program - are so important to keep our littlest Victorians healthy and safe."

Quote attributable to MCRI Group Leader Vaccine Trials and Uptake Professor Margie Danchin

"The MCRI RSVChoice study will help us to understand what factors impact parents' choice, including how well immunisations work to prevent their baby getting sick from RSV at home. It will improve immunisation acceptance, uptake and protection of Victorian babies and their families."