



June 25, 2024

Helen Keipp Talbot, MD
Chair
Advisory Committee on Immunization
Practices
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention
Atlanta, GA

Melinda Wharton, MD, MPH
Associate Director for Vaccine Policy
National Center for Immunization and
Respiratory Diseases
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention
Atlanta, GA

Re: RSV Vaccine Discussion at the June 26–28, 2024 Meeting of the Advisory Committee On Immunization Practices (ACIP)

Dear Dr. Talbot and Dr. Wharton,

On behalf of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), I am pleased to provide comments to the ACIP with regard to the discussion of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccines at the upcoming meeting. AAFA is the leading patient organization advocating for people with asthma and allergies, and the oldest asthma and allergy patient group in the world.

RSV can be particularly dangerous for people with asthma, adults with weakened immune systems, or older adults with these populations being at greater risk of RSV-related hospitalization or death.¹ RSV can trigger and worsen asthma episodes or attacks. Because of the severe impact of RSV on adults with asthma or other chronic lung disease, we are disheartened by the lack of discussion planned around possible recommendations of the RSV vaccine for people aged 50–59 at higher risk.

In the U.S., middle-aged and older adults with asthma face a myriad of challenges. Approximately 9.1% of people aged 50–64 have asthma, a rate that is

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. RSV in Older Adults and Adults with Chronic Medical Conditions. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/older-adults/index.html>.



higher than that experienced by adults aged 35–50.² As people age, asthma can have more severe consequences, triggering more symptoms and higher death rates.³ Physical changes from aging, reduced motor and other skills, lower income, and the demands of other comorbid conditions can all exacerbate older adults' asthma and create barriers to care.⁴ Asthma mortality also increases with age, with asthma patients over 55 having a five times higher risk of overall mortality than younger adults.⁵

Overall, older adults are more likely to be underdiagnosed and undertreated for asthma than younger adults.⁶ Reflecting overall disparities in asthma in the U.S., asthma impacts older adults of certain racial and ethnic groups more severely; for example, older adults with asthma who are Black, Hispanic, and/or low income are at a heightened risk of frequent hospitalization.⁷

Because of these factors, we ask the ACIP to take into account the overall potential impact of RSV vaccines for adults with asthma, including those subpopulations most burdened by the disease. Recommending the RSV vaccine for adults ages 50–59 at higher risk of RSV could reduce asthma exacerbations, improve quality of life and reduce mortality, for people over age 50 with asthma. We strongly encourage the committee to deliberate the merits of this vaccine recommendation.

² National Center for Health Statistics. Percentage of current asthma for adults aged 18 and over, United States, 2019–2022. National Health Interview Survey. Generated interactively: Jun 24, 2024 from https://www.cdc.gov/NHISDataQueryTool/SHS_adult/index.html.

Approximately 8% of adults aged 35–50 have asthma.

³ AAFA, “Asthma in Older Adults” (reviewed 2022). Available at <https://aafa.org/asthma/living-with-asthma/asthma-in-older-adults/>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Tsai C, Lee W, Hanania NA. Age-Related differences in clinical outcomes for acute asthma in the United States, 2006–2008. *J Allergy Clin Immunol.* 2012;129:1252–1258.e1. doi: 10.1016/j.jaci.2012.01.061

⁶ Dunn, R. M., Busse, P. J., & Wechsler, M. E. (2018). Asthma in the elderly and late-onset adult asthma. *Allergy*, 73(2), 284–294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/all.13258>

⁷ *Id.*



Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America

Thank you very much for your important work reviewing these vaccines. If you would like any additional information regarding asthma, older adults, and RSV, please do not hesitate to contact Jenna Riemenschneider at jennar@aaafa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kenneth Mendez'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kenneth Mendez
President and Chief Executive Officer
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America