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**Bulletin No. 11**  
September 7, 2022

## Palivizumab Prophylaxis in Alaska for the 2022–23 RSV Season

### Background

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is an important cause of hospitalization for infants in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Hospitalization rates are higher for premature infants and infants with chronic lung disease or congenital heart disease.<sup>1</sup> Rural Alaska Native children have had >5-fold higher RSV hospitalization rates compared to other US children.<sup>2</sup>

Palivizumab (Synagis®) is a monoclonal antibody that reduces the risk of RSV hospitalization in certain high-risk children.<sup>1</sup> The current American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) eligibility criteria for palivizumab prophylaxis restricts use to children at highest risk.<sup>1</sup> The AAP recommends a maximum of five palivizumab doses to cover the season, which typically lasts ≤5 months.<sup>1</sup> The AAP *Redbook* recognizes Alaska’s unique RSV seasonality and increased hospitalizations in Alaska Native infants and supports Alaska-specific prophylaxis criteria.<sup>3</sup>

In March 2020, following the institution of masking and social distancing for the prevention of coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19), RSV infections decreased rapidly and dramatically in the United States.<sup>3</sup> In a marked deviation from the typical season, RSV activity remained very low nationally through the traditional 2020–21 RSV season, but increased in the spring of 2021. In August 2021, the AAP strongly supported early use of palivizumab in regions experiencing interseasonal RSV activity with reassessment monthly.<sup>3</sup> On December 27, 2021, the AAP supported consideration of >5 palivizumab doses in regions with continued RSV transmission in the 2021–22 RSV season. On August 26, 2022, the AAP recommended regional monitoring of RSV and palivizumab timing due to considerable regional variation in RSV activity.<sup>3</sup>

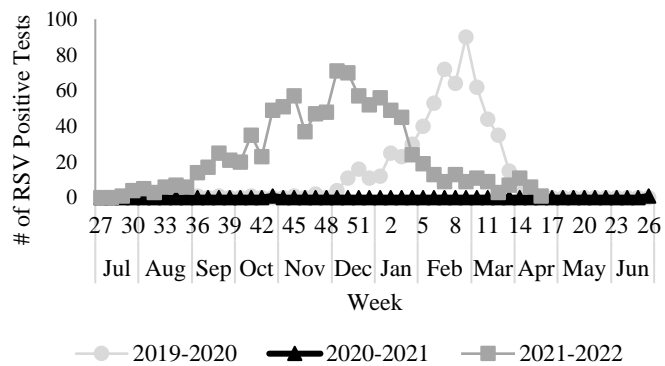
### Alaska’s 2021–22 RSV Activity and Palivizumab Criteria

Laboratory data from four Alaska hospital laboratories (Figure) are used to track RSV trends. In Alaska, RSV activity remained low from late March 2020 through summer 2021. In August 2021, RSV hospitalizations began to increase in Alaska, signifying an interseasonal RSV period. RSV activity peaked in December 2021 and continued at lower levels through April 2022. The Statewide RSV Workgroup met on August 25, 2021, November 22, 2021, and February 4, 2022, to review available RSV laboratory and hospitalization data and make staged recommendations for administration of palivizumab during September 3, 2021 through May 15, 2022. Alaska Medicaid authorized five doses of palivizumab to high-risk children during this period, and a sixth dose for children who qualified for five doses prior to December 1, 2021.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

### Alaska’s 2022–23 Medicaid Palivizumab Clinical Criteria

On August 11, 2022, the Statewide RSV Seasonality Workgroup met and reviewed RSV activity data from preceding years. Based on this review, the Workgroup agreed to recommend palivizumab administration from November 14, 2022, through May 15, 2023. During the 2022–23 season, Alaska Medicaid will reimburse up to five monthly palivizumab doses from November 14, 2022, through May 15, 2023. The eligibility criteria for palivizumab will remain the same as during 2021–22 and will continue to reflect the 2009 AAP criteria (Table).<sup>1</sup> If the 2022–23 RSV season starts prior to November 14, new guidance will be issued, and Medicaid will adjust the coverage dates accordingly.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure. RSV-Positive Tests at Four Alaska Hospitals During the 2019–20, 2020–2021, and 2021–22 Seasons**



**Table. Alaska Medicaid Palivizumab Coverage, 2022–23 Season<sup>7</sup>**

Date of Birth	Gestational Age (Wks)	Risk Factors	# of Doses 11/14/22–5/15/23
Born on or after Aug 16, 2022 (<3 months)	32 to <35	At least one: • daycare attendance • sibling aged <5 years • home without running water • ≥3 children per bedroom, ≥7 people per household	≤3, until 90 days of age
Born after May 14, 2022 (<6 months)	29 to <32		≤5
Born after Nov 14, 2021 (<12 months)	<29		≤5
Born after Nov 14, 2021 (<12 months)	Any	• congenital airway anomaly • neuromuscular disease	≤5
Born on or after Nov 14, 2020, with CHD; or born after Nov 14, 2020, with CLD	Any	• congenital heart disease (CHD) • chronic lung disease (CLD)	≤5

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- Medicaid 2022-23 Criteria: *ALASKA MEDICAID November 2022 – May 2023 Season Synagis® (palivizumab)*