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Updated Palivizumab Prophylaxis Guidance for the 2022–23 RSV Season

Background

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

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

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.³ In a marked deviation from the typical season, RSV activity remained very low nationally through the traditional 2020–21 but started increasing spring 2021. During 2021–22, the AAP recommended regional monitoring of RSV and supported early use of palivizumab and consideration of more than five palivizumab doses in regions with continued RSV transmission during the 2021–22 RSV season.³

Alaska's 2021–22 RSV Activity and Palivizumab Criteria
Laboratory data from Alaska hospital laboratories and the Alaska State Virology Laboratory (ASVL) are used to track RSV trends. In Alaska, RSV activity remained low from late March 2020 through summer 2021. RSV activity increased in August 2021, peaked in December 2021, and continued 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 made 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.^{4,5,6}

Updated 2022–23 Medicaid Palivizumab Clinical Criteria

On August 11, 2022, the Statewide RSV Seasonality Workgroup met and reviewed RSV activity data. The Workgroup published a recommendation for palivizumab administration from November 14, 2022, through May 15, 2023, and Medicaid authorized up to five monthly palivizumab doses during this time period.^{7,8} The Workgroup advised that if the 2022–23 RSV season starts prior to November 14, new guidance will be issued, and Medicaid will adjust the coverage dates accordingly.⁸

Alaska health provider and laboratory reports of RSV-positive outpatient visits and hospitalizations began to increase in Anchorage, Mat-Susitna Borough, and

southeastern Alaska in late September 2022, and RSV-positive outpatient visits were identified in Fairbanks starting in early October 2022. The Statewide RSV Seasonality Workgroup met on October 12, 2022, and recommended starting palivizumab administration on October 17, 2022. During the 2022–23 season, Alaska Medicaid will reimburse up to five monthly palivizumab doses from October 17, 2022, through May 15, 2023; Medicaid will authorize a sixth dose on a case-by-case basis. The eligibility criteria for palivizumab will remain the same as during 2021–22 and will continue to reflect the 2009 AAP criteria (Table).¹

Table. Alaska Medicaid Palivizumab Coverage, 2022–23 Season⁷

Date of Birth	Gestational Age (Wks)	Risk Factors	# of Doses 10/17/22–5/15/23
Born on or after July 19, 2022 (<3 months)	32 to <35	At least one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 April 17, 2022 (<6 months)	29 to <32		≤ 5
Born after October 17, 2021 (<12 months)	<29		≤ 5
Born after October 17, 2021 (<12 months)	Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • congenital airway anomaly • neuromuscular disease 	≤ 5
Born on or after October 17, 2020, with CHD; or born after October 17, 2020, with CLD	Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • congenital heart disease (CHD) • chronic lung disease (CLD) 	≤ 5

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