



## I'm pregnant or breastfeeding. When should I get a COVID vaccine?

For most people, getting the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible is the safest choice. Vaccination is the best way to reduce the risks COVID-19 infection and COVID related complications for both you and your baby.

Multiple national pregnancy experts **strongly recommend** that pregnant and lactating people be vaccinated against COVID-19.

### What are the benefits of getting a COVID Vaccine?

1. COVID-19 infection during pregnancy is an independent risk factor for severe COVID disease and death by the CDC.
  - Other risk factors for severe COVID illness in pregnancy include obesity, diabetes, heart disease and age older than 35. Hispanic, Latinx and Black patients are disproportionately affected by severe COVID infection and death.
  - Public health measures such as masking when appropriate, handwashing, and social distancing continue to remain beneficial.
2. The clinical effectiveness of coronavirus vaccination in pregnancy, based on preliminary research data, demonstrates that the vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna are highly effective against COVID 19.
3. COVID is dangerous. It is more dangerous for pregnant people.
  - COVID patients who are pregnant are more likely to end up in the intensive care unit (ICU) or on a ventilator than COVID patients who are not pregnant.
  - Preterm birth may be more common for pregnant people with severe COVID.
  - Pregnant people are more likely to die of COVID than non-pregnant people with COVID who are the same age.
4. The COVID vaccines prevent COVID infections.
  - As COVID infections go up in our communities, your risk of getting COVID goes up too.
  - Getting a vaccine is the most effective way to prevent you from getting COVID.
5. The COVID vaccines cannot give you COVID.
  - These vaccines have no live virus.
  - These vaccines do NOT contain ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant people or to the fetus.
  - Many vaccines are routinely given in pregnancy and are safe (for example: tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, and flu).

## What are the risks of getting COVID vaccine?

1. Although pregnant women were not included in vaccine trials, we do know the following from women who have been vaccinated during pregnancy.
  - The vaccine appears to be highly effective in pregnant women.
  - Adverse pregnancy outcomes after vaccination during pregnancy have been preliminarily evaluated and do not appear to be increased. No increase was noted for miscarriage, stillbirth, birth defects, neonatal death and infant hospitalizations.
2. People getting the vaccine will probably have some side effects.
  - Many people had symptoms caused by their immune system's normal response to the vaccine. The most common side effects were:
    - injection site reactions like sore arm
    - fatigue
    - headache
    - muscle pain
    - chills
    - joint pain
    - fever

Pregnant women who experience fever following vaccination should take Tylenol (acetaminophen) as directed.

More serious allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis are rare.

## What do the experts recommend?

Because COVID is dangerous and easily spread, the CDC says that the vaccines for COVID-19 are recommended for adults (and children 12 and older). Many pregnancy experts strongly recommend that pregnant and lactating people be vaccinated against COVID-19:

- American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG)
- Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine (SMFM)
- American College of Nurse Midwives
- Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)
- Fetal Therapy Nurse Network
- Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)
- Society of OB/GYN Hospitalists

## What about breastfeeding?

The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine report that there is no reason to believe that the vaccine affects the safety of breastmilk. The vaccine does not contain the virus, so there is no risk of infecting your baby.

When we have an infection or get a vaccine, our bodies make antibodies to fight the infection. Antibodies can pass into the breastmilk and then to the baby - and may help prevent infections.

## Summary

Considering the risks and benefits COVID 19 vaccination in pregnant and breastfeeding women, the evidence to date suggests vaccination is much safer than the short term, long term, and potentially fatal effects of COVID-19 infection.

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