

I'm Pregnant.
Should I get the COVID-19 Vaccine?



For most people, getting the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible is the safest choice.

Data is emerging on people who are pregnant and got a vaccine.

The information below will help you make an informed choice about whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine while you are pregnant, breastfeeding or trying to get pregnant.

Your Options

Get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is available

OR

Wait for more information about the vaccines in pregnancy.

Understanding COVID-19 in pregnancy

COVID-19 is dangerous. It is more dangerous in pregnancy.

- Pregnant COVID-19 patients are five times more likely to end up in the intensive care unit than non-pregnant COVID-19 patients.¹
- Preterm birth may be more common.²
- Pregnant people are more likely to die of COVID-19 than other people with COVID-19 who are the same age.^{3,4}

What are the benefits of getting the COVID-19 Vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccines prevent moderate and severe COVID-19.

Getting a vaccine will prevent you from getting very sick with COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccines may reduce spread.

The vaccine may help keep you from giving COVID-19 to people around you.

These vaccines have no live virus⁵ and 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, and flu).

What are the risks and unknowns of getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Each vaccine was tested in over 20,000 people and there were no serious side effects.
- We do not know if the vaccines work as well in pregnancy as they do in non-pregnant people.
- We know that in studies done by Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, there were no adverse effects on female reproduction or fetal development.^{6,7}
- So far, the mRNA vaccines have been given to over 30,000 pregnant people in the U.S. who registered with the CDC.⁸
- Of those pregnancies, 275 have been reported as complete. The number of miscarriages in people who got the vaccine (15%) was about the same as we see in pregnant people who have NOT gotten a COVID-19 vaccine (10-25 %).⁸
- Birth defects were seen in the same number of people as in the general population who have NOT gotten a COVID-19 vaccine (3-4%).⁸

People getting the vaccine will probably have some side effects.

This is a normal response by the immune system. These effects are more common after the second dose and in the mRNA vaccines but were not more common in pregnancy. The most common side effects are:^{6,7,8}

- Arm pain (~84%)
- Fatigue (~62%)
- Fever (~14%)
- Muscle pain (~38%)
- Chills (~32%)
- Joint pain (~24%)

Of every 100-500 people who get a vaccine, one will get a high fever (over 102°F).

- A persistent high fever during the first trimester might increase the risk of fetal abnormalities or miscarriage.
- The CDC recommends using acetaminophen during pregnancy if you have a high fever. Another option is to delay your COVID-19 vaccine until after the first trimester.

What do the experts recommend?

The CDC recommends the COVID-19 vaccines for adults.⁹ However, because there are no studies of pregnant people yet, there are no clear recommendations for pregnant people. This is standard for a new drug and early research of the vaccines in pregnancy is reassuring.

The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine strongly recommends that pregnant individuals have access to COVID-19 vaccines, and that each person talk to their doctor or midwife about their own personal choice.¹⁰

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that the COVID-19 vaccine should not be withheld from pregnant individuals.¹¹

The World Health Organization states the mRNA vaccine can be given to people who are breastfeeding without stopping breastfeeding after vaccination. They recommend that pregnant people at high risk of exposure to COVID-19 or with medical problems may be vaccinated in consultation with their health care provider.¹²

What about breastfeeding?

The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine reports that there is no reason to believe that the COVID-19 vaccine affects the safety of breast milk. When you have an infection or get a vaccine, your body makes antibodies to fight the infection. Antibodies formed from vaccines given during pregnancy do pass into breast milk and then to your baby to help prevent infections. Since the vaccine does not contain the virus, there is no risk of breast milk containing the virus.

What else should I think about to help me decide?

Make sure you understand as much as you can about COVID-19 and about the vaccine. Ask a trusted source, like your midwife or doctor.

Think about your own personal risk.

Look at the information on the next panel and think about your risk of getting COVID-19 and think about your safety – are you able to stay safe?

The risks of getting sick from COVID-19 are higher if...

- You have contact with people outside your home
 - You are 35 years old or older
 - You are overweight
 - You have other medical problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease
 - You are a smoker
 - You are a racial or ethnic minority, or your community has a high rate of COVID-19 infections
 - You are a healthcare worker¹³
- ...it probably makes sense to get the vaccine.**

If you are not at higher risk for COVID-19 and...

- You always wear a mask
 - You and the people you live with can socially distance from others for the whole pregnancy
 - Your community does NOT have high or increasing COVID-19 cases
 - You think the vaccine itself will make you very nervous (you are more worried about the unknown risks than about getting COVID-19)
 - You have had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine
- ...it might make sense for you to wait for more information.**

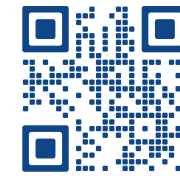
Summary

- COVID-19 seems to cause more harm in pregnant people than in people of the same age who are not pregnant.
- The risks of getting an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy are thought to be small but are not totally known.
- You should consider your own personal risk of getting COVID-19. If your personal risk is high, or there are many cases of COVID-19 in your community, it probably makes sense for you to get a vaccine while pregnant.
- **Whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy is your choice.**

Do you have more questions?

Call your doctor or midwife to talk about your decision.

If you want more information on specific vaccines and references, scan the QR code.



Source: Shared Decision-Making: COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy working group at the University of Massachusetts Medical School – Baystate.

References:

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