

COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding

It is your choice whether or not to get the COVID-19 vaccine. This handout will review the risks and benefits of the COVID-19 vaccines to help you make an informed decision about the vaccine.

Pregnancy and COVID-19

Although the overall risk of severe illness is low, you are at an **increased** risk for severe illness from COVID-19 if you are pregnant. You are more likely to end up in the intensive care unit (ICU), on a ventilator or die than non-pregnant COVID-19 patients. Preterm birth may also be more common with severe COVID.

Risks of COVID-19 Vaccine

There is not a lot of data about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy. Studies are ongoing. Based on how these vaccines work in the body, experts believe they are safe during pregnancy.

Studies in animals that received the COVID-19 vaccine before or during pregnancy found no safety concerns.

Benefits of COVID-19 Vaccines

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine may prevent COVID-19 infections and severe COVID-19 disease. It can prevent COVID-19 complications such as:

- Ending up in ICU
- Needing to be on a ventilator
- Death
- Preterm birth

These vaccines have no live virus so they cannot give you COVID-19. These vaccines do **not** contain ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant people or to the fetus.

Many other vaccines are safely given in pregnancy (such as: tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, and flu).

Side Effects of COVID-19 Vaccines

Side effects are normal. They are caused by your immune system's normal response to the vaccine.

- Injection site pain
- Injection site swelling
- Injection site redness
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain
- Fever
- Nausea
- Feeling unwell
- Swollen lymph nodes

COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant

We suggest that pregnant women receive the COVID-19 vaccine. You may choose to delay your COVID vaccine until after the first trimester. A persistent high fever during the first trimester could increase the risk of fetal complications. Take Tylenol[®] (acetaminophen) if you have a high fever.

COVID-19 Vaccines While Breastfeeding

We suggest that breastfeeding women receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine should not affect the safety of breastmilk. The vaccine does not contain the virus, so there is no risk of giving your baby COVID-19.

When you have an infection or get a vaccine, your body makes antibodies to fight the infection. These antibodies can pass into the breastmilk and then to the baby. This may help prevent your baby from getting COVID-19.

COVID-19 Vaccines While Trying to Conceive

We strongly suggest that those who are not pregnant get the COVID-19 vaccine. We also strongly suggest that you get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are thinking about or trying to get pregnant. You do not need to delay pregnancy after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

When to Call

Please ask your provider about any questions you may have about the vaccine.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2021 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#8201