



# PREGNANCY, BREASTFEEDING, AND COVID-19 VACCINES AND PREVENTION



**There are several ways to reduce your risk of getting COVID-19. As we continue learning more about COVID-19 vaccines, it is important for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding to understand their options. COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people 12 years and older, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant, or might become pregnant in the future. If you have questions about getting vaccinated, a conversation with your healthcare provider might help.**

## **Pregnancy and the COVID-19 Vaccines**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommend COVID-19 vaccination for people who are pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or might become pregnant.<sup>1</sup> Growing evidence about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy suggest that the potential benefits of the vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination.

As clinical trials that look at the safety and how well the COVID-19 vaccines work in pregnant people continue, early data suggest that people receiving an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine are at lower risk for COVID-19 infection than unvaccinated individuals. Additionally, studies in animals receiving a Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, or Johnson & Johnson's Janssen (J&J/Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine before or during pregnancy found no safety concerns. None of these three vaccines contain the live COVID-19 virus, so they cannot give someone COVID-19.

## **COVID-19 Infection During Pregnancy**

Although the overall risk of severe illness is low, pregnant people are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 when compared to non-pregnant people. Severe illness includes illness that results in intensive care admission, mechanical ventilation, or death. Additionally, pregnant people with COVID-19 might be at increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth, compared with pregnant women without COVID-19. Risk of COVID-19 infection and adverse pregnancy outcomes are important considerations when making the decision about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

## **Breastfeeding and COVID-19 Vaccines**

The CDC and ACOG recommend COVID-19 vaccination for all people over the age of 12 years, including people who are breastfeeding.<sup>1</sup> However, the clinical trials for the COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for use under an Emergency Use Authorization in the United States did not include people who are breastfeeding. Because the vaccines have not been studied on lactating people, there are no data available on:

- the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in lactating people,
- the effects of vaccination on the breastfed infant,
- the effects on milk production or excretion.

The COVID-19 vaccines authorized now are non-replicating vaccines, meaning they are able to create an immune response but do not reproduce inside host cells. Because non-replicating vaccines pose no risk for lactating people or their infants, COVID-19 vaccines are also thought to not be a risk to the breastfeeding infant.

A study in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology found that COVID-19 mRNA vaccines generated a strong immune response in both pregnant and lactating women. In both groups, the immune response from the vaccine was greater than the immune response to natural COVID-19 infection. This study also found that antibodies were passed on from the mother to the fetus or infant through the placenta or breastmilk, which may help protect the baby against COVID-19.<sup>2</sup>



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For more information, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html#print>

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(Continued)

## COVID-19 Prevention for You and Your Baby

Whether or not you decide to get a COVID-19 vaccine, it is important to continue practicing preventative measures. Once you receive a vaccine during pregnancy and after the birth, you can take the following steps to help stay healthy:<sup>3</sup>

- keep your prenatal and postnatal care visits,
- wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission, especially to maximize protection from variants and prevent possibly spreading to others,
- wear a mask in certain places like health care settings, schools, airports, and public transit,
- wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol,
- talk with an ob-gyn or other health care professional if you have any questions about your health or COVID-19.

After the birth of your baby, in order to keep them safe and healthy, the CDC recommends that you:<sup>4</sup>

- do not put a face shield or mask on your baby,
- limit visitors to see your new baby,
- keep distance between your baby and people who do not live in your household or who are sick,
- know possible signs and symptoms of COVID-19 infection among babies,
- bring your baby for newborn visits,
- ensure safe sleep for your baby,
- ensure your own social, emotional, and mental health.

When breastfeeding, the CDC recommends that you always wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before breastfeeding or expressing breast milk, even if you don't have COVID-19.

For the most up-to-date information from the CDC visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html#print>

## Adapted From:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Information about COVID-19 Vaccines for People who Are Pregnant or Breastfeeding (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html#print>)

## References

- 1.) The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Vaccinated Pregnant and Lactating Patients Against COVID-19. Updated July 30, 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/12/vaccinating-pregnant-and-lactating-patients-against-covid-19>.
- 2.) Gray KJ, Bordt EA, Atyeo C, Deriso E, Akinwunmi B, Young N, et al. COVID-19 vaccine response in pregnant and lactating women: a cohort study. American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology. 2021 March 25; DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2021.03.023>.
- 3.) The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Coronavirus (COVID-19), Pregnancy, and Breastfeeding: A Message for Patients. Updated August 4, 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/coronavirus-covid-19-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding>.
- 4.) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Breastfeeding and Caring for Newborns. Updated July 1, 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>.



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