

Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and the COVID-19 Vaccine

Is it Safe?

KNOW THE FACTS. There are many rumors that the COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe for pregnancy, the health of your baby, and breastfeeding. Expert communities, including the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, strongly recommend that pregnant individuals have access to COVID-19 vaccines. This information is provided to help you make a well-informed decision. *For most people, getting the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible is the safest choice.*

WHAT IS THE RISK OF COVID-19 FOR PREGNANT PEOPLE?

- Pregnant COVID-19 patients are at increased risk of more severe illness, including intensive care unit admission, assisted breathing, and death when compared to nonpregnant COVID-19 patients.
- Pregnant COVID-19 patients with obesity and certain other medical conditions may be at an even higher risk of severe illness.
- Pregnant COVID-19 patients may also be at an increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth, compared to pregnant people without COVID-19.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE COVID-19 VACCINES?

- The COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at preventing COVID-19 infections.
- The COVID-19 vaccines decrease the risk of serious illness in the event of infection and prevents the spread of COVID-19 infections to others.

IS IT SAFE TO GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE WHILE PREGNANT?

- Based on how the COVID-19 vaccines work, experts believe they are unlikely to pose a specific risk for people who are pregnant.
- The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain the live COVID-19 virus; they do not interact or change a person's DNA.
- Women under age 50 including pregnant individuals can receive any Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized COVID-19 vaccine available to them. However, they should be aware of the rare risk of blood clotting after receipt of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine and that other COVID-19 vaccines are available (i.e., messenger RNA vaccines such as Pfizer and Moderna).

HAVE THE COVID-19 VACCINES BEEN TESTED ON PREGNANT PEOPLE?

- Pregnant people were not included in initial COVID-19 vaccine testing trials, so there is limited data available to assess the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant people; however, based on how the COVID-19 vaccines work, experts believe the COVID-19 vaccines are unlikely to pose a specific risk to pregnant people.
- COVID-19 vaccine testing in pregnant individuals initiated in Feb 2021. Vaccine manufacturers are currently monitoring people in clinical trials who later became pregnant.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and FDA have safety monitoring systems in place to capture information about vaccination during pregnancy.



CAN SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE COVID-19 VACCINES IMPACT PREGNANCY?

- COVID-19 vaccine side effects include mild to moderate fever, headache, and muscle aches; side effects may vary from person to person. These side effects are not expected to be any different for pregnant people than for nonpregnant people.
- Pregnant people who experience a fever or other symptoms (e.g., headache, muscle ache, etc.) following vaccination may consider taking acetaminophen (like Tylenol or generic alternatives) to help manage symptoms. The CDC recommends using acetaminophen during pregnancy for fevers 102 degrees and higher.

IS IT SAFE TO GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE WHILE BREASTFEEDING?

- COVID-19 vaccines are not thought to pose a risk to the breastfed infant or to the supply/excretion of breastmilk.
- The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain the live COVID-19 virus, therefore there is no risk that the COVID-19 vaccines could directly infect a mother or baby.
- The COVID-19 vaccines are being offered to people who are breastfeeding/lactating. You do not have to delay or stop breastfeeding after getting vaccinated.

HAVE THE COVID-19 VACCINES BEEN TESTED ON BREASTFEEDING PEOPLE?

- Lactating individuals were not included in the initial COVID-19 vaccine testing trials.
- There is limited data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in breastfeeding people, the effects on breastmilk production/excretion, and the effects of COVID-19 vaccines on breastfed infants. However, experience with other vaccines is reassuring.

HOW SHOULD I DECIDE WHETHER TO GET A COVID-19 VACCINE?

- Getting vaccinated is an important choice for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- People deciding whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine should consider the following issues:
 - Your likelihood of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.
 - The activity level of the virus in your community.
 - The risks to you and your baby if you get the COVID-19 virus.
 - The effectiveness of the vaccine in protecting you from COVID-19.
 - The facts about the safety of the vaccine for pregnant and breastfeeding people.
- For most people, getting the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible is the safest choice.

For information from professional fertility organizations that are not affiliated with the Department of Defense (DoD), consider visiting the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists website](#) or the [Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine](#) for [patient education](#) (also available in Spanish).

To help make the best choice for you, consider using the CDC Guide on [Decision Making Information for Pregnant Women](#).



Have questions or concerns about receiving the vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding? Consult with your healthcare provider.