

## COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet Information for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women

The information provided below, and the information found in the document entitled: “COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet” will help you weigh the risks and benefits of vaccination and help you make an informed choice that is right for you. Be sure to read both documents carefully.

### COVID-19 Vaccination in pregnant or breastfeeding women

For most people, getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the safest choice. There are currently four COVID-19 vaccines approved in Canada. Public Health has approved that all pregnant women received an mRNA vaccine. Please refer to the Government of New Brunswick website and the COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet for more information.

There is no evidence about whether the COVID-19 vaccines are safe or effective during pregnancy because the vaccines have not yet been tested in pregnant and breastfeeding women. The information below will help you make an informed decision about whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine while you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

### Your options

Get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is available to you

Wait for more information about the vaccine in pregnancy/breastfeeding

Decide not to get the vaccine at this time

### What are the benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

- There is emerging data from Canada and other countries that pregnant individuals infected with COVID-19 appear more likely to develop respiratory complication, therefore are at increased risks for hospitalization and intensive care unit admission, especially those with underlying medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, asthma, and heart disease.
- Data from Canada and the United States show that there is an increased risk of premature birth for pregnant individuals infected with COVID-19.
- Getting the vaccine can help prevent you from getting COVID and may help keep you from giving COVID to people around you, like your family.

- The COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID. Because the approved vaccines are not live virus vaccines, there is no risk of infecting your baby.
- The vaccines do not contain ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant women or their fetuses, unless you have a known allergy to one of the vaccine ingredients.
- Many vaccines are routinely given during pregnancy and are safe. (For example, tetanus, diphtheria and influenza)

### **What are the potential risks of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding?**

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women were excluded from clinical trials therefore the vaccine has not been tested on pregnant or breastfeeding people.
- It is not known if the vaccine works as well in pregnant people as it does in non-pregnant people.
- It is also not known if there are specific or different risks for pregnant and breastfeeding women from the general population or an increased risk of miscarriage or fetal anomalies.
- There were 23 women, 12 in the vaccine arm and 11 in the placebo arm who reported pregnancies during the Pfizer-BioNTech clinical trial. For the Moderna trial, there were 13 women, 6 in the vaccine arm and 7 in the placebo arm who reported pregnancies during the trial. They are currently following pregnancy outcomes with no report of adverse effects to date.
- The Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States is monitoring pregnant people who have received the vaccine. So far, no adverse event or safety problems related to the fetus or the pregnancy have been reported on pregnant women that have been vaccinated
- Some people may experience side effects from the vaccine. The most common side effects are:
  - Pain at injection site
  - Tiredness
  - Headache
  - Muscle pain
  - Chills
  - Joint pain
  - Fever

It is recommended to take acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) if you have a fever.

You are invited to participate in a Canadian registry that will track the pregnancy outcomes of individuals that receive the vaccine while pregnant. You can join here:

<https://ridprogram.med.ubc.ca/vaccine-surveillance/>

## What about breastfeeding?

- Breastfeeding women were also excluded from trials. Therefore, there is no data on the safety of the vaccine in lactating women, on the breastfed infant or on milk production.
- There is however no reason to believe that the vaccine affects the safety of breastmilk.
- The vaccines do not contain the virus therefore 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.

## How do I decide?

Think about your own personal risk. Look at the table below and think about your risk of contracting COVID-19 and your risk of getting sick (left). Then think about your safety; are you able to stay safe (right).

Additional resources can be found at: <https://www.pregnancyinfo.ca/covid/>

### The risks of contracting and getting sick from COVID-19 are higher if:

- You are 35 years and older
- You are overweight
- You have chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease
- You are a smoker
- Your community has a high rate of COVID-19 infection
- You are a healthcare worker or someone at increased risk of exposure

### If you are not at higher risk and:

- You are always able to wear a mask
- You and the people you live with can socially distance from others
- Your community does not have high or increasing COVID-19 cases
- You think the vaccine itself makes you nervous; you worry more about the unknown risk of the vaccine than about getting COVID-19

It is recommended you talk with your healthcare provider or a healthcare professional. They can help you understand and weigh the benefits and risks of vaccination specific to you and help you make an informed choice

Whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy or breastfeeding is your choice.