COVID-19 Vaccination in pregnant or breastfeeding women

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

There is no evidence about whether the mRNA 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

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

- Most pregnant women who become infected with COVID-19 will have mild-to-moderate symptoms and many can be asymptomatic.
- However, there is emerging data from Canada and other countries that pregnant individuals infected with COVID-19 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.
- The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines prevent about 95% of COVID infections.
- 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 mRNA COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID. Because mRNA 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 the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna 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. They are currently following pregnancy outcomes with no report of adverse effects to date.

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 mRNA 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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The risks of contracting and getting sick from COVID-19 are higher if:</th>
<th>If you are not at higher risk and:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o You are 35 years and older</td>
<td>o You are always able to wear a mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o You are overweight</td>
<td>o You and the people you live with can socially distance from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o You have medical problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease</td>
<td>o Your community does not have high or increasing COVID-19 cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o You are a smoker</td>
<td>o You think the vaccine itself makes you nervous; you worry more about the unknown risk of the vaccine than about getting COVID-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Your community has a high rate of COVID-19 infection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o You are a healthcare worker or someone at increased risk of exposure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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.