

Information sheet and decision aid: Updated Monday 20 December 2021

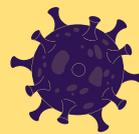
All pregnant women in the UK have been offered first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 booster vaccines are being offered to all pregnant women over age of 18 years, 3 months after their second dose.

On 16 December 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) announced that pregnant women are now considered a 'vulnerable' group within the COVID-19 vaccination programme, emphasising the urgency of them receiving COVID-19 vaccination and booster doses.

Vaccination is strongly recommended in pregnancy, but the decision whether to have the vaccine is your choice. The information below will help you make an informed choice about whether to get your COVID-19 vaccines if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant.



COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective in pregnancy



Catching COVID-19 during pregnancy can cause severe illness

What are the benefits of vaccination?

- ✓ **COVID-19 may be more dangerous in pregnancy**
 - Hospital admission and severe illness are more common in pregnant women compared to those not pregnant
 - Stillbirth and preterm birth is more likely compared to pregnant women without COVID-19
 - Pregnant women with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk of severe illness
- ✓ **Vaccination is effective in preventing severe illness from COVID-19 infection**
- ✓ **You cannot get COVID-19 from vaccination**
 - COVID-19 vaccines do NOT contain live coronavirus
 - Vaccines do NOT contain any additional ingredients that are harmful to pregnant women or their babies
 - Other non-live vaccines (whooping cough, influenza) are safe for pregnant women and their unborn babies

What are the risks of vaccination?

✗ **There are no known risks of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy**

- COVID-19 vaccines have been given to large numbers of people to ensure they meet stringent standards of effectiveness and safety
- Data from the United States, where more than 177,000 pregnant women have had a COVID-19 vaccine (mostly using Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna vaccines), has not raised any safety concerns. Over 100,000 pregnant women in England and Scotland have also received a COVID-19 vaccine with no adverse effects recorded
- There has not been any evidence to suggest safety concerns with COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy so far

✗ **Side-effects from the vaccine are common, and usually mild. These do not affect pregnancy, but may include:**

- injection site reactions (sore arm)
- muscle pain
- fatigue
- fever, chills
- headache
- joint pain

✗ **Extremely rare but serious side-effects involving thrombosis (blood clots) have been reported for the AstraZeneca vaccine, but this does not seem to be more likely in pregnant than in non-pregnant people. The Pfizer or Moderna vaccines should be offered to pregnant women where available as most of the safety monitoring data in pregnancy from the United States and the UK relates to these two vaccines.**

? You may wish to discuss COVID-19 vaccination in more detail with your doctor or midwife

 If you decide to have a COVID-19 vaccine, please tell the vaccination team that you are pregnant so that this can be recorded



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How to decide: COVID-19 vaccination advice for women who are, or may be, pregnant

This leaflet is designed to help you make an informed choice about whether to have the COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy. We know that catching COVID-19 during pregnancy can cause severe illness in a pregnant woman which is why COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy is so strongly recommended. There is considerable emerging evidence on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy, and no evidence that the vaccines can cause harm to you or your baby.

What should I do to help me decide?

- Make sure you know as much as you can about the vaccine and the risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy. You can ask your midwife, doctor or an immunisation nurse for information
- Look up the information on the **UK Health Security Agency** (formally Public Health England) or **professional** websites. Available evidence on the safety of vaccines in pregnancy is published by **UKTIS**
- Look at the information below and think about your risk of catching and becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19. Are you able to reduce your chance of being exposed to COVID-19?

What is known about COVID-19 in pregnancy?

About two-thirds of women who test positive for COVID-19 in pregnancy have no symptoms at all. In the UK, data show's that approximately one in 100 pregnant women who have been admitted to hospital test positive for COVID-19 (although this will change during the stages of the pandemic). One in 10 women admitted to hospital with COVID-19 require intensive care. Pregnant women have a higher chance of becoming seriously unwell with COVID-19. If you have COVID-19 in pregnancy, you are twice as likely to have a stillbirth, and it is twice as likely that your baby will be born prematurely, which can affect their long term-health. Having the vaccine makes it much less likely that hospital admission will be required - 96% of pregnant women admitted to hospital with symptomatic COVID-19 since 1 February had not received a vaccine.

What is known about the effects of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnant women?

Data from the United States and the UK, where over 275,000 pregnant women have had a COVID-19 vaccine, has not raised any safety concerns. The initial trials which showed that these vaccines are safe and effective did not include pregnant women – as often happens in clinical trials. This means there was limited information about the effects of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnant women at the start of the vaccination programme, but we have a lot more real-time data now.

As these are new vaccines, there are no studies yet on the long-term effects on babies born to women who had a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy. But as COVID-19 vaccines are not 'live' vaccines they cannot cause infection, and other non-live vaccines have been given to women in pregnancy for many years without any safety concerns. Protective antibodies from COVID-19 vaccination can be passed from mother to baby, helping with the baby's immunity to COVID-19 as well.

Research from 13 studies in five countries, involving more than 100,000 people who are pregnant women, shows that having the vaccine does not increase the risk of miscarriage, preterm birth, or stillbirth. Nor does it increase the risk of having a small-for-gestational age baby, or the risk of congenital abnormalities.

COVID-19 vaccines do not contain ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant women or to a developing baby. Studies of the vaccines in animals to look at the effects on pregnancy have shown no evidence that the vaccine causes harm to the pregnancy or fertility. The COVID-19 vaccines that we are using in the UK are not 'live' vaccines and so cannot cause COVID-19 infection in you or your baby.

Pregnant women should be offered the Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, as most of the safety monitoring data from the United States and UK relates to these two vaccines.

Pregnant women who have had one dose of AstraZeneca (before they became pregnant or earlier on in pregnancy), can have AstraZeneca for their second dose or one of the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer or Moderna). Evidence suggests that those who receive mixed schedules make a good immune response.

Does it matter what stage of pregnancy I am in?

The vaccine is considered to be safe and effective at any stage of pregnancy. There's no evidence that delaying until after the first 12 weeks is necessary.

One dose of COVID-19 vaccination gives you good protection against the original infection, but with the Delta variant of the virus, two doses are needed to give a good level of immunity. Second doses are given 8 weeks after the first dose. A booster (third dose) is recommended to provide the best protection against the most recent (Omicron) variant.

Do pregnant women need a COVID-19 booster vaccine?

On 12 December 2021, the government announced that all adults in the UK, including pregnant women, should book a COVID-19 booster vaccine (third dose) by the end of the year. Booster vaccines can be given 3 months (91 days) after your 2nd dose.

COVID-19 booster vaccination is strongly recommended as it provides the best protection against the virus for pregnant women and their babies.

High-risk pregnant woman with an underlying medical condition which causes immunosuppression will be offered a fourth dose of vaccination, after their booster dose.

The JCVI also advised that people can have both the COVID-19 booster vaccine and the flu jab at the same time.

Will having a COVID-19 vaccination affect my work?

No vaccine is 100% effective, but studies suggest that it will help prevent some (but not necessarily all) transmission. Having a vaccine will not change your occupational risk assessment, but if you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated you and your employer should take a more precautionary approach, as described in the government's [occupational health guidance](#). All pregnant women will still need to follow the advice in your workplace and at home:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face mask as necessary
- wash your hands carefully and frequently

The information below will help you to think about your decision to have the vaccine if you are pregnant and are eligible for vaccination

You are at higher risk of catching COVID-19 if:

- You or someone in your household is a health or social care worker or works in a care home
- Your community has a high or increasing rate of COVID-19 infections
- You have frequent contact with people outside your home
- You are not able to comply with social distancing for the rest of your pregnancy
- You live in a crowded household
- You are of Black or Asian ethnicity, or from another minority ethnicity background



You are at higher risk of becoming unwell with COVID-19 if:

- You have underlying medical conditions such as immune problems, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or asthma
- You are overweight (your BMI is 25 or over)
- You are over the age of 35
- You are in your third trimester of pregnancy (over 28 weeks)



What are the recommendations?

- COVID-19 vaccines are strongly recommended in pregnancy. Vaccination is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both women and babies
- Vaccination is recommended to all pregnant women but especially if you are at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell if you do catch COVID-19
- You may wish to discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination, including possible side-effects, with a healthcare professional before making your final decision.