

Merged information sheet and decision aid: Published 24 February 2021

I am pregnant and have been offered a COVID-19 vaccination. What are my options?

Vaccination is being offered to some pregnant women including health and social care workers and those with high risk medical conditions

Trials testing the vaccine in pregnant and breastfeeding women have not yet taken place. Whether to get the vaccine in pregnancy is your choice. The information below will help you make an informed choice about whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant.

Your options:



Get a COVID-19 vaccine

or



Wait for more information
about the vaccine in pregnancy

Who can be vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccination is being offered to two groups of pregnant women:

1. Those with high risk medical conditions who have a **greater risk of severe illness** from COVID-19
2. Health or social care workers – who are at **very high risk of catching COVID-19**

The vaccine is currently being offered to people who are considered at high risk from COVID-19 because of health and personal factors that include age, ethnicity, BMI, and underlying health conditions.

If you have an eligible underlying medical condition, you will be contacted by the NHS; you do not need to do anything yourself.

If you are not a health or social care worker and do not have underlying medical conditions, then you will not currently be offered vaccination during pregnancy.

What are the benefits of the vaccination?

✓ COVID-19 may be more dangerous in pregnancy

Studies have shown that hospital admission and severe illness may be more common in pregnant women (compared to those not pregnant), especially those in the third trimester of pregnancy, and that 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 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 considered to be safe for pregnant women and their unborn babies.

What are the risks of the vaccination?

✗ The COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been tested specifically in pregnant women

- COVID-19 vaccines have been given to large numbers of people to ensure they meet stringent standards of effectiveness and safety.
- There is still very little evidence for pregnant women, but the information that we do have does not show any safety concerns or harm to pregnancy from the COVID-19 vaccine. More information may come from studies in the future.
- We do not know whether the vaccine works as well in pregnancy.
- We do not know whether there are unique downsides in pregnancy, like different side effects, an increased risk of miscarriage or problems with the baby's development

✗ Side effects from the vaccine are common. These do not affect pregnancy, but may include:

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

? If you think that you may be eligible for COVID-19 vaccination, please discuss this with your GP 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.

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 if it is offered to you. At present, the COVID-19 vaccine is being offered to pregnant women with certain medical conditions and to health and social care workers. We know that vaccines are effective in preventing COVID-19. Some pregnant women may become seriously unwell with COVID-19 infection, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy. There are limited data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy, but there is 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.
- Look up the information on the [NHS](#), [Public Health England \(PHE\)](#) or [professional](#) websites. Available evidence on the safety of vaccines in pregnancy is published by [UKTIS](#), part of PHE.
- 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, surveillance shows that approximately one in 300 pregnant women are currently being admitted to hospital with COVID-19. However, some pregnant women can get life-threatening illness from COVID-19 – particularly if they have underlying health conditions.

In the later stages of pregnancy women are at increased risk of becoming seriously unwell with COVID-19. If this happens, it is about three times more likely that your baby will be born prematurely, which can affect their long-term health.

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

The large trials which showed that these vaccines are safe and effective did not include pregnant women – as often happens in clinical trials. This means there is limited information about the effects of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnant women. A very small number of women became pregnant after they received the vaccine in a trial. There was no sign of problems, but the numbers are too small to be certain.

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.



Does it matter what stage of pregnancy I am in?

The vaccine should work whatever the stage of pregnancy you are in. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that women do not need a pregnancy test before vaccination, and that women planning a pregnancy do not need to delay pregnancy after vaccination. However, as COVID-19 has more serious complications in later pregnancy, some women may choose to delay their vaccine until after the first 12 weeks (which are most important for the baby's development) and will plan to have the first dose at any time from 13 weeks onwards.



Will having a COVID-19 vaccination affect my work?

No vaccine is 100% effective, and it is not yet known whether it will stop you passing on the virus. So, having a vaccine will not change your occupational risk assessment. This includes advice that you should not work in high-risk areas if you have another serious medical condition, or if you are beyond 28 weeks' gestation. You will still need to follow the advice in your workplace and at home:

- practice 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 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
- You are over the age 35
- You are in your third trimester of pregnancy (over 28 weeks)



What should I do if I am offered a COVID-19 vaccine?

- If you are at higher risk of catching COVID-19, you should consider getting the vaccine
- If you are at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell if you do catch COVID-19, you should consider getting the vaccine
- If you have further questions or are unsure, you should have a discussion with a midwife, immunisation nurse, pharmacist or doctor

Further information, Q&As, and the latest version of this leaflet are available at rcog.org.uk/covid-vaccine