



Mae Brechu yn achub bywydau
Vaccination saves lives



How to protect you and your baby

**Information about vaccinations
in pregnancy**



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During pregnancy, your immune system is naturally weaker than usual. This means you are more likely to have certain infections and illnesses that can be harmful to you and your developing baby.

Vaccination is the safest and most effective way of protecting pregnant women and their babies against serious diseases such as coronavirus, flu and whooping cough.

Why are vaccines important for pregnant women?

Vaccination during pregnancy can help prevent disease or make illness less serious for you and your baby. This is because the antibodies you develop are passed to your unborn baby, helping to protect them in their first few weeks of life.

Before becoming pregnant, check that your vaccinations are up to date to protect against diseases that can cause illness in you or your unborn baby.



What vaccines are recommended in pregnancy?

COVID-19 vaccine

The COVID-19 vaccine is strongly recommended in pregnancy as pregnant women are at increased risk from coronavirus. Some pregnant women have become seriously unwell and needed hospital treatment. Pregnant women with coronavirus have a higher risk of being admitted to intensive care than women of the same age who are not pregnant. If you get coronavirus with symptoms in pregnancy, it's three times more likely that your baby will be born early.

Flu vaccine

There is good evidence that pregnant women have a higher chance of developing complications if they get flu, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy. One of the most common complications of flu is bronchitis – a chest infection that can become serious and develop into pneumonia. If you have flu while you're pregnant, it could cause your baby to be born prematurely or have a low birthweight, and may even lead to stillbirth. Flu can be very serious for babies. When you have a flu vaccine while pregnant, it continues to help protect your baby for up to six months after they are born.

Whooping cough vaccine

Whooping cough can be a very serious infection, especially for young babies. It can lead to pneumonia and even death. Having the vaccine in pregnancy helps protect your baby in the first few weeks of life. In the UK, published studies have shown that the vaccine is over 90% effective in protecting your baby from whooping cough until their vaccinations at two months.



COVID-19, flu and whooping cough vaccinations in pregnancy can help to keep you and your baby safe.

Do these vaccines have side effects?

These vaccines are safe in pregnancy. Flu and whooping cough vaccines have been given safely to pregnant women for many years, and more than 200,000 pregnant women have now had COVID-19 vaccines with no safety concerns.

However, like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. This is because they work by triggering a response in your immune system. Most of these side effects are mild and only last a few days, and not everyone gets them.

The most common side effect is a sore arm where you had the injection. Other side effects include fever, feeling tired, general aches, chills or flu-like symptoms, swelling of the arm you had the vaccination in, loss of appetite, irritability, and headache. Serious side effects are very rare.

These symptoms normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call NHS **111**. If you do get advice from a doctor or midwife, make sure you tell them about your vaccinations so that they can assess you properly.

You can also report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the **Yellow Card scheme**. You can do this online by searching Yellow Card scheme, by downloading the Yellow Card app, or by calling **0800 731 6789** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

When should I get vaccinated?

You can have the flu vaccine at any time during your pregnancy. The flu vaccine is recommended every time you're pregnant, even if you have had the vaccine before. Getting vaccinated each flu season protects you against new strains of the virus and reduces the risk of spreading flu to your baby.

It's important that pregnant women get all the recommended doses of the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible. The vaccine can be given at any stage during pregnancy. Reports from around the world show Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are safe to use in pregnancy.

The whooping cough vaccine (Boostrix-IPV) is very safe, and is recommended to be given from 16 weeks up to 32 weeks of pregnancy. This gives your baby the best chance of being protected from birth, as you will have transferred your antibodies to them before they are born. The whooping cough vaccine is recommended every time you're pregnant, even if you have had the vaccine before.



Breastfeeding advice

The benefits of breastfeeding are well known, and all these vaccines can safely be given to women who are breastfeeding. The antibodies you make following vaccination can pass into your breast milk. These may give your baby some protection against these diseases.

You should not stop breastfeeding before your vaccination and you can continue breastfeeding as normal afterwards.

The COVID-19 vaccine and fertility

There's no evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 vaccine will affect fertility in women or men. If you are thinking of getting pregnant, the vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your baby against the known risks of coronavirus in pregnancy. You do not need to avoid pregnancy after having the coronavirus vaccination.



What do I need to do?

You will be given information by the NHS about when and where to get vaccinated. If you are not sure what is best for you, discuss this with your midwife, who will explain more about the vaccines and how they can help protect you and your baby. It is safe to have all the vaccines at the same appointment if appropriate.

If you are unwell when your appointment is due, it is better to wait until you have recovered to have your vaccines, but you should try to have them as soon as possible.

Other vaccines to discuss with your midwife

There are other vaccines you may want to discuss with your midwife. These include hepatitis B and BCG which helps protect against TB (tuberculosis). These vaccines are recommended for some babies soon after birth.

You may be offered the MMR vaccine (which protects against measles, mumps and rubella) soon after you have had your baby if you have not previously had two doses of this vaccine. If you are not sure whether you have had two doses, check with your GP.

MMR is a live (weakened) vaccine so is not given during pregnancy. You can have the MMR vaccine up to one month before becoming pregnant, or you can have the vaccination after your baby is born.

When your baby is born you will be invited to bring them for their routine vaccines, usually at your GP surgery or a baby clinic. Your midwife or health visitor will be able to tell you about these.

More information

You can find more information on vaccines offered in Wales at: **phw.nhs.uk/vaccines**

You can find out more information about these vaccines, including their contents and possible side effects, at **www.medicines.org.uk/emc**

You will need to enter the name of the vaccine in the search box.

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists: **www.rcog.org.uk/covid-vaccine**

You can report suspected side effects online at **www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard** or by downloading the Yellow Card app or calling **0800 731 6789** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

If you have any questions or want more information, you can visit **111.wales.nhs.uk**, talk to your doctor or midwife or call NHS **111** Wales.

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit: **111.wales.nhs.uk/AboutUs/Yourinformation**

For other formats of this leaflet, visit: **phw.nhs.uk/vaccines/accessible-information**



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