

COVID-19 Vaccine

PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy is the best way to reduce the risks of COVID-19 infection for both you and your baby. The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM), along with other pregnancy experts, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommends that women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or may become pregnant in the future be vaccinated against COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 affect pregnant people?

Although most pregnant women with COVID-19 have only a mild illness, about 1 in 10 will develop severe illness. Compared with those who aren't pregnant, pregnant women infected by the COVID-19 virus:

- Are 3 times more likely to need ICU care
- Are 2 to 3 times more likely to need advanced life support and a breathing tube
- Have a small increased risk of dying due to COVID-19

COVID-19 infection may also increase the risk of pregnancy complications, including stillbirth and preterm birth.

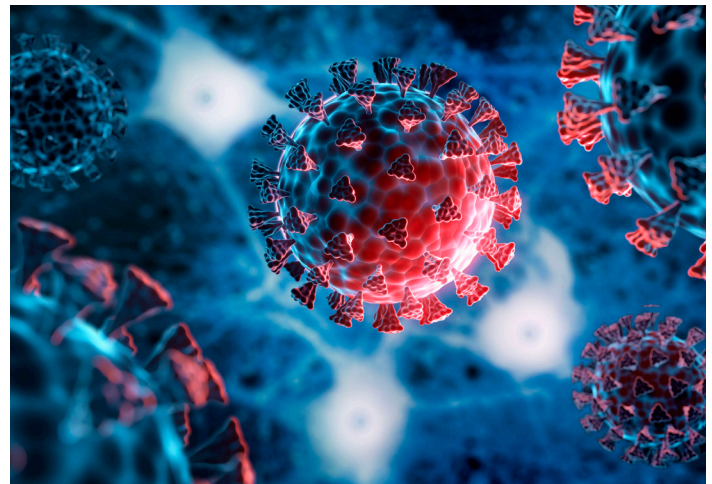
Data show that older pregnant women and those with preexisting health conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disorders, have an especially increased risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19.

Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy?

If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, consider talking with your healthcare professional about the vaccine. Here are some key points to think about:

The Vaccines Work

COVID-19 vaccines have been shown repeatedly to help protect from severe illness, hospitalization, and death if you get infected with COVID-19.



Getting Vaccinated Helps Protect Your Baby

Getting the vaccine while pregnant helps your **immune system** create anti-COVID-19 **antibodies**, which then pass to your baby through the **placenta**. These antibodies protect your baby from severe COVID-19 illness and hospitalization until they can be vaccinated at age 6 months.

The Vaccines Don't Cross the Placenta or Affect Future Fertility

The current COVID-19 vaccines are not live vaccines. The vaccines do not cross the **placenta** because they are quickly broken down by the muscle where they're given. Remember—the vaccine helps **your** body make protective antibodies, which **do** cross the placenta and help protect your baby after they're born.

There is no evidence that vaccines affect future fertility or causes major changes to the menstrual cycle.

When should I get vaccinated?

You can get vaccinated at any time during pregnancy. Getting the COVID-19 initial dose or booster doses has not been shown to increase the risk of pregnancy loss or miscarriage. The following information shows the available vaccines and the recommended doses you should have in 2025-2026 based on your COVID-19 vaccination history:

If you have NEVER had a COVID-19 vaccine:

Vaccine:	Number of doses to get in 2025-2026	Wait time between doses
Moderna, OR	1	N/A
Pfizer, OR	1	N/A
Novavax (for ages 12 and older only)	2	3-8 weeks between doses 1 and 2

If you have previously received 1 or more doses of a COVID-19 vaccine:

Vaccine:	Number of doses to get in 2025-2026	Wait time between doses
Moderna, OR	1	8 weeks or more after last dose
Pfizer, OR	1	8 weeks or more after last dose
Novavax (for ages 12 and older only)	1	8 weeks or more after last dose

What About Side Effects?

Side effects may occur with the first 3 days after getting vaccinated and are generally mild and well-tolerated. These include mild to moderate fever, headache, and muscle aches. Side effects may be worse after the second dose of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. Fever should be avoided during pregnancy, especially in the first trimester. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is recommended if you've gotten the vaccine and developed a fever. This medication is safe during pregnancy and does not affect how the vaccine works.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration monitor the safety of vaccines. You can help this effort by signing up for [V-safe](#), a program that monitors people who've been vaccinated. No unexpected pregnancy or fetal problems have occurred. There have been no reports of any increased risk of pregnancy loss, growth problems, or birth defects.

Quick Facts

- COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy decreases the risk of severe illness for both mother and baby.
- Getting the vaccine while pregnant helps your body create antibodies against the COVID-19 virus, which then pass to the fetus. These antibodies protect your baby from severe COVID-19 illness and hospitalization until they can be vaccinated at age 6 months.
- Vaccines do **not** cross the placenta, do not increase risk for miscarriage, and do not affect fertility or cause major changes to the menstrual cycle.
- You can get the COVID-19 vaccine at any time during pregnancy.
- The COVID-19 vaccine can cause mild side effects, like fever or headache. Acetaminophen is safe to use if needed.

[CDC: COVID-19 Vaccination for Women Who Are Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#)

[CDC: COVID-19 Vaccination for Women Who Would Like to Have a Baby](#)

[MothertoBaby: COVID-19 Subunit Vaccine \(Novavax\)](#)

[MothertoBaby: COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine \(Moderna/Spikevax® and Pfizer/Comirnaty®\)](#)

Glossary

Antibodies: Proteins made by the immune system in response to a foreign substance, such as a virus.

Immune system: The cells and organs that protect the body against foreign substances, such as bacteria and viruses.

Placenta: A special organ that develops during pregnancy. It allows the transfer of nutrients, antibodies, and oxygen to the fetus. It also makes hormones that sustain the pregnancy.

To find a maternal-fetal medicine subspecialist in your area, go to <https://www.smfm.org/find-an-mfm>. The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine's Patient Education Series reflects the content of current, published SMFM practice guidelines. Each series document has undergone extensive internal review prior to publication. Patient Education documents should not be used as a substitute for the advice and care of a medical professional.

Updated August 2025