

COVID-19 VACCINE AND PREGNANCY

Frequently asked questions

Are pregnant women at an increased risk of contracting COVID-19?

No. There is no evidence that demonstrates that pregnant women are more susceptible to contracting the virus compared to non-pregnant women. However, if COVID-19 is contracted, pregnant women are at an increased risk for severe illness.

Are pregnant women at additional risk if they contract COVID-19?

Yes. Pregnant women are at an increased risk for severe illness if they contract COVID-19. This includes respiratory compromise that may lead to hospital and ICU admission, mechanical ventilation and death.

Are there increased risks to my baby if I contract COVID-19?

Yes and no. So far, we do not believe that COVID-19 increases the risk for congenital malformations (like Rubella or Zika virus). However, there may be an increased risk for preterm birth which does put babies at an increased risk for morbidity and mortality.

What are the FDA approved COVID-19 vaccines and how do they work?

Currently, there are three FDA approved COVID-19 vaccines that are available in the United States and include **Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and J&J/Janssen**.

The **Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines** are mRNA vaccines that do not contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 and therefore cannot give someone COVID-19. mRNA vaccines do not interact with a person's DNA or cause genetic changes because mRNA does not enter the nucleus of the cell where the DNA is kept.

The **J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine** is a viral vector vaccine. It uses a modified version of a different virus to deliver important instructions to our cells. Viral vector technology has been used in other vaccine development programs and have been given to pregnant women in all trimesters and have not shown any adverse pregnancy-related outcomes.

How can you ensure that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe in pregnancy?

Based on what we know about how the vaccines work, scientists believe that they are unlikely to cause maternal or fetal harm. Unfortunately, pregnant women were not included in the initial vaccine trials. However, there are ongoing clinical trials that look at the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines among women planning pregnancy or who are already pregnant. In fact, as of March 8, 2021, there have been more than **44,000 women** who have self-reported pregnancy at the time they received their COVID-19 vaccine.

What are the side effects from getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

Side effects from the vaccine appear to be similar in pregnant women compared to their non-pregnant counterparts and include:

- Pain, redness, and swelling at insertion site
- Fatigue, headache, muscle pain, low-grade fever, chills, and nausea

These symptoms appear to be self-limited and usually do not last more than 24 hours.

What should I take if I get a fever or experience other side effects after the COVID-19 vaccine and am pregnant?

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is safe in pregnancy. Please do not take Ibuprofen during pregnancy.

When will pregnant women be eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination?

Now! In Tennessee, pregnant women and household contacts > 16 years old are eligible as of March 2021 to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Should I wait until the first trimester is over to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

No. There has not been shown to be any additional risk by getting the COVID-19 vaccine in the first trimester. The vaccine can be given during any trimester in pregnancy.

Is it true that the COVID-19 vaccine is linked to infertility?

No. This is an unfounded claim that has been scientifically disproven. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine and American Society for Reproductive Medicine all support vaccination in women who are trying to conceive or who are already pregnant.

If you have additional questions about getting vaccinated, please call our office for an appointment.

Please see below for additional resources on the COVID-19 vaccine and pregnancy:

<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/12/vaccinating-pregnant-and-lactating-patients-against-covid-19>

<https://www.acog.org/news/news-releases/2021/01/acog-and-smfm-joint-statement-on-who-recommendations-regarding-covid-19-vaccines-and-pregnant-individuals>

<https://www.acog.org/covid-19/vaccination-site-recommendations-pregnant-individuals>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>