

COVID-19 Protein Subunit Vaccine (Novavax)

This sheet is about exposure to the COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine (Novavax) in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information is based on published research studies. It should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) is an illness caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. The virus spreads mostly by close person-to-person contact. When an infected person breathes, talks, coughs, or sneezes, the virus can spread to others who are nearby.

Having a COVID-19 infection while pregnant increases the chance of severe illness and pregnancy complications. Studies have shown that women who are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy are less likely to get very sick or have pregnancy complications from a COVID-19 infection than women who are not up to date.

For more information on COVID-19, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/covid-19/>.

What is a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine?

COVID-19 protein subunit vaccines help protect against the virus that causes COVID-19. The COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine approved for use in the United States is known as Novavax/Nuvaxovid®. There are other COVID-19 protein subunit vaccines used outside of the United States. Protein subunit vaccines do not contain live virus that can cause COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have more information about the Novavax COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine here: <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/how-they-work.html>. The Novavax protein subunit vaccine is not 100% effective at preventing COVID-19 but can greatly reduce the chance of getting very sick from the virus.

Talk to your healthcare provider, contact a MotherToBaby specialist, or visit the CDC website to learn if you are up to date and how to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines: <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>. People who have a weakened immune system might need additional doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information on mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/covid-19-mrna/>.

Can getting a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine make it harder to get pregnant or affect fertility treatments?

Studies have not been done to see if getting a Novavax COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine can make it harder to get pregnant. Several studies of women undergoing in-vitro fertilization (IVF) who received other COVID-19 protein subunit vaccines found that getting a vaccine did not affect ability to get pregnant. There is currently no recommendation to stop or delay fertility treatment after getting the vaccine or to avoid getting the vaccine after treatment.

I just got a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine. How long do I need to wait before I get pregnant?

There is no recommendation to wait before trying to get pregnant after getting a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine.

Does getting a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine increase the chance of miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. Studies have not been done to see if getting a Novavax COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine can increase the chance of miscarriage. Several studies of women receiving other protein subunit vaccines did not show an increased chance of miscarriage.

Does getting a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine increase the chance of birth defects?

Birth defects can happen in any pregnancy for different reasons. Out of all babies born every year, about 3 out of 100 (3%) will have a birth defect. We look at research studies to try to understand if an exposure, like a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine, might increase the chance of birth defects in pregnancy. Studies have not been done in humans to see if the Novavax COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine can increase the chance of birth defects. Animal studies in rats

did not show an increased chance of birth defects. Several studies of women receiving other protein subunit vaccines have not shown an increased chance of birth defects.

Fever is a possible side effect of the COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine. A high fever in the first trimester can increase the chance of certain birth defects. Acetaminophen is usually recommended to reduce fever during pregnancy. For more information about fever and pregnancy, see the MotherToBaby fact sheet about fever/hyperthermia at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/hyperthermia-pregnancy/>.

Does getting a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine in pregnancy increase the chance of other pregnancy-related problems?

Studies have not been done to see if the Novavax COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine can increase the chance of pregnancy-related problems, such as preterm delivery (birth before week 37) or low birth weight (weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces (2500 grams) at birth). Animal studies in rats did not report other pregnancy-related problems. Several studies of women receiving other protein subunit vaccines have not shown an increased chance of pregnancy-related problems.

Does getting a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine in pregnancy affect future behavior or learning for the child?

Based on what is known about how this and other vaccines work in the body, getting a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine is not expected to increase the chances of behavior or learning problems for the child.

Does getting a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine during pregnancy protect the baby from the virus after delivery?

It is not known if getting a Novavax COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine during pregnancy would protect the baby from COVID-19 after delivery. Studies looking at another type of COVID-19 vaccine (mRNA) show that the antibodies a person makes after getting the vaccine in pregnancy can pass to the developing fetus. Research is needed to know if this is also true for COVID-19 protein subunit vaccines.

Breastfeeding and COVID-19 protein subunit vaccines:

Studies have not been done to see if the Novavax COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine passes into breast milk. However, because it is not a live vaccine that can make copies of itself (replicate) and spread through the body, it is not expected to get into the milk.

There is no recommendation to stop or delay breastfeeding or discard breast milk after getting the Novavax COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about all your breastfeeding questions.

If a man gets a COVID-19 protein subunit vaccine, could it affect his fertility or increase the chance of birth defects?

COVID-19 protein subunit vaccines have not been studied to see if they can affect men's fertility (ability to get a partner pregnant) or increase the chance of birth defects. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at <https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/>.

Please click here for references.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org).

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