COVID-19 Vaccines

*Information on COVID-19 vaccines is rapidly evolving, and this fact sheet could become outdated by the time you read it. For the most up to date information, please call MotherToBaby at 866-626-6847.*

This sheet talks about COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. This information should not take the place of medical care and advice from your healthcare provider.

*What is COVID-19?*

COVID-19 (short for Coronavirus Disease 2019) is an illness caused by a virus (called SARS-CoV-2). The virus easily spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets that come from our mouths and noses when we breathe, talk, cough, or sneeze. For more information on COVID-19, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/covid-19/.

*What are COVID-19 vaccines?*

COVID-19 vaccines help protect against the virus that causes COVID-19. Three different COVID-19 vaccines are currently approved for use in the United States: two messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines (manufactured by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech) that require two shots given 3 to 4 weeks apart, and a viral vector vaccine (manufactured by Johnson & Johnson/Janssen) that requires only one shot. These vaccines work by helping the body develop immunity against the virus that causes COVID-19. None of these vaccines contains live virus that could cause COVID-19. You can learn more about how the different vaccines work here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html.

For more general information about other kinds of vaccines, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet about vaccines at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/vaccines-pregnancy/.

*Is there anyone who shouldn’t get a COVID-19 vaccine?*

You should not get a COVID-19 vaccine if you have had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) or an immediate allergic reaction of any kind (within 4 hours) to a previous dose of the vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine. If you have had a severe allergic reaction to any other vaccine or injection, talk to your healthcare provider about whether or not you should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

*Does getting a COVID-19 vaccine make it harder to get pregnant?*

There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause side effects that would make it harder to get pregnant.

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

Since the COVID-19 vaccines are not live vaccines, there is currently no recommended waiting period before trying to get pregnant. In addition, if someone becomes pregnant after getting the first dose of an mRNA vaccine, they can still receive the second dose on time as scheduled.

*I am undergoing fertility treatment. Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?*

The American Society of Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) recommends that people undergoing fertility treatment get the vaccine. There is no recommendation to postpone fertility treatment after getting the vaccine or to avoid vaccination after treatment. However, people scheduled for procedures including oocyte retrieval, embryo transfer, and intrauterine insemination should avoid COVID-19 vaccination at least three days before and three days after their procedure. This is not because being vaccinated is known to be unsafe, but because having common side effects from the vaccine might make it harder to monitor the person during and after surgery (such as knowing if their symptoms are related to the vaccine or to possible infection related to the procedure).

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

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. Based on what is known about these and other vaccines, getting a COVID-19 vaccine is not expected to increase the chance of miscarriage. Researchers will continue to study COVID-19 vaccines.
in pregnancy. Talk with your healthcare provider about the risks and benefits of getting the vaccine during pregnancy.

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

Every pregnancy starts out with a 3-5% chance of having a birth defect. This is called the background risk. Based on what is known about these and other vaccines, getting a COVID-19 vaccine is not expected to increase the chance of birth defects. Talk with your healthcare provider about the risks and benefits of getting the vaccine during pregnancy.

Fever is a possible side effect of the COVID-19 vaccines. A high fever in the first trimester can increase the chance of certain birth defects. Acetaminophen is usually recommended to reduce fever during pregnancy. Those who develop a fever after getting the vaccine should speak with their healthcare providers to confirm that taking acetaminophen is the best way to lower it. For more information about fever and pregnancy, see the MotherToBaby fact sheet about hyperthermia at [https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/hyperthermia-pregnancy/](https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/hyperthermia-pregnancy/).

**Does getting a COVID-19 vaccine increase the chance of other pregnancy complications?**

Based on what is known about these and other vaccines, getting a COVID-19 vaccine is not expected to increase the chance of pregnancy complications. The first group of 712 people to give birth who enrolled in a pregnancy registry after getting an mRNA vaccine during pregnancy had outcomes that were similar to what is expected in the general pregnant population. There were no increases in preterm deliveries, babies born smaller than expected, or neonatal deaths. Most of these pregnant people received their vaccines in the third trimester.

People who are pregnant and get a COVID-19 infection may have a higher chance of severe illness as compared to people who are not pregnant. This can lead to pregnancy complications such as preterm delivery (birth before 37 weeks of pregnancy). Getting a COVID-19 vaccine reduces the chance of severe illness and pregnancy complications caused by COVID-19. Talk with your healthcare provider about the risks and benefits of getting the vaccine during pregnancy.

**Does getting a COVID-19 vaccine cause long-term problems in behavior or learning for the baby?**

It will take time to follow infants of people who were vaccinated in pregnancy in order to answer this question. However, based on what is known about these and other vaccines, getting a COVID-19 vaccine is not expected to cause long-term problems for the baby.

**If I get a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy, will it protect my baby from the virus after delivery?**

After getting a vaccine, our bodies make antibodies against the virus. These antibodies have been found in the (umbilical) cord blood at the time of delivery in women who were vaccinated during pregnancy. This suggests that the antibodies can pass to the baby during pregnancy. More research is needed to know if these antibodies might protect the baby from the virus, how long that protection might last, or if there is a better time in pregnancy to be vaccinated in order to pass more antibodies to the baby.

**Can I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I am breastfeeding?**

Based on the way these and other vaccines work, experts do not believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine while breastfeeding would be harmful for a breastfeeding infant. Studies have shown that other kinds of vaccines that are routinely given in the United States are not harmful during breastfeeding. (Only the smallpox and yellow fever vaccines, which are not routinely given in the U.S., are not recommended for most people while breastfeeding.)

The components of the COVID-19 vaccines are not expected to enter the breast milk. If any small amounts of vaccine ingredients did enter the breast milk, they would most likely be destroyed in the baby’s stomach. There is currently no recommendation to avoid the vaccine while breastfeeding, and no recommendation to postpone breastfeeding or discard breast milk after getting the vaccine.

Antibodies against the virus that causes COVID-19 have been found in the breast milk of people who have been vaccinated. More research is needed to know if these antibodies might protect a breastfeeding child against the virus or how long that protection might last. Researchers will continue to study COVID-19 vaccines in breastfeeding. Talk to your healthcare provider about all of your breastfeeding questions.

**I got the COVID-19 vaccine. Can it make it harder for me to get my partner pregnant or increase the chance of birth defects?**
One report on 43 men found no differences in their sperm before and after getting a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase the risks to a pregnancy. For more information, please see the MotherToBaby fact sheet Paternal Exposures at https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/paternal-exposures-pregnancy/.

MotherToBaby is currently conducting an observational study looking at COVID-19 in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. If you know or suspect you may have COVID-19 and you are interested in taking part in this study, please call 1-877-311-8972 or sign up at https://mothertobaby.org/join-study/.

Please click here to view references.