

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* Information on COVID-19 vaccines is rapidly evolving, and this fact sheet could become outdated by the time you read it.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 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 provide protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. Different kinds of COVID-19 vaccines are being researched and developed at this time. All of these vaccines are given by injection. Some of them require two shots that are given a few weeks apart, and others require only one shot.

Two kinds of COVID-19 vaccines are currently approved for use in the United States: messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines (manufactured by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech) and a viral vector vaccine (manufactured by Janssen). None of these vaccines contain live virus that could cause COVID-19. Both kinds of vaccines work by triggering an immune response in the body that helps make antibodies against the virus that causes 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>.

COVID-19 vaccines are not 100% effective at preventing COVID-19. In addition, it is not yet known how long the vaccines will provide protection against the virus, or if they will stop a person from spreading the virus if they have it. So, it is important to continue practicing preventive measures, such as wearing a face covering, avoiding close contact with those who are sick, staying 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, and washing hands often. As more people become vaccinated, these recommendations may change.

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?

As with every vaccine, you should not get a COVID-19 vaccine if you have had a severe allergic reaction (e.g. anaphylaxis) to the vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine. If you have had a severe allergic reaction to any other vaccine or type of injection, talk to your healthcare provider about whether or not you should get a COVID-19 vaccine.

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

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) state there is no need to wait to get pregnant after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Pregnancy testing is not routinely recommended before getting the vaccine. ACOG adds that if someone becomes pregnant after getting a first dose of the vaccine, they should still get the second dose as planned, if a second dose is required.

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

Miscarriage can occur in any pregnancy. The COVID-19 vaccines are just starting to be studied in pregnancy, so information is still limited. However, based on what is known about these and other vaccines, it is not expected that getting a COVID-19 vaccine would increase the chance of miscarriage. 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. The

COVID-19 vaccines are just starting to be studied in pregnancy, so information is still limited. However, based on what is known about these and other vaccines, experts do not believe the vaccines would increase the chance of birth defects. The CDC, ACOG, and other maternal health organizations agree that people who are pregnant can choose to get the vaccine if they are part of a group that is eligible to be vaccinated. 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/>.

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

Based on what is known about these and other vaccines, the COVID-19 vaccines are not expected to increase the chance of pregnancy complications. However, people who are pregnant and get sick with COVID-19 may have a higher chance of severe illness 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?

This question has not been studied.

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

The COVID-19 vaccines are just starting to be studied for use in breastfeeding, so information is still limited. However, 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 CDC and ACOG state that people who are breastfeeding can choose to get a COVID-19 vaccine if they are part of a group that is eligible to be vaccinated. The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine recommends that people continue breastfeeding as usual after getting the vaccine. 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?

COVID-19 vaccines have not been studied for effects on male fertility. 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.

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

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