

COVID vaccine relating to fertility, pregnancy and lactation

Deciding whether and when to have the Covid vaccine as a pregnant or nursing person is a very personal choice, and it's worth checking in with your doctor as you weigh your options. Keep in mind that two people with similar risk profiles could very well get all the same information and come to different conclusions here, and that's totally ok! The reality is that we have very little data on the safety or efficacy of these vaccines for pregnant and breastfeeding people, as they were not included in the initial trials of the vaccines.

As we expect more and more people to become eligible for vaccination in the coming months, this is a good time to weigh your options. You will want to think through your individual likelihood to be exposed or to expose others to the coronavirus, taking into consideration your work, cases in your area, and the most recent information and recommendations available to you and your physician. It's also important to evaluate any history you have of an allergic reaction to a vaccine.

Pregnancy:

Clinical trials on covid vaccines administered to pregnant individuals are currently underway. In the US, the CDC notes that animal studies of the three available vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson) showed no safety concerns for subjects receiving the vaccine before or during pregnancy. We have seen some evidence that pregnant people who acquire COVID-19 are likely to have more severe cases requiring hospitalization and respiratory interventions. At this point, pregnancy alone is not being cited as a reason to avoid vaccination, and it's worth noting that the vaccine is designed to help reduce the chance of severe cases.

Lactation:

Vaccine trials in the United States have not included lactating subjects so far, meaning we don't have much data yet on how the vaccine could affect you, your baby, or your milk. However, all the vaccines currently authorized for use are non-replicating, meaning that they will stimulate an immune response in your body but will not reproduce in your cells. For this reason, the CDC is stating that the vaccines will pose no risk to lactating individuals or their infants, and other respected scientific agencies have also put out statements to this effect (see below for external resources). When you are eligible and if you would like to get the vaccine, you can do so and there is no need to wean your baby or "pump and dump" your milk. Interestingly, a very small study of six lactating people who received Covid vaccines, published in March 2021, showed that their milk contained a statistically significant increase in antibodies by two weeks after the second vaccine dose. The study does not include data on whether this increase in antibodies

protects babies from the covid virus, but the researchers think it's definitely possible that this could be true (links in resources below).

Considering:

There is no need to have a pregnancy test prior to vaccination, and you may choose to have the vaccine when you are eligible if you want to. While there is not yet any published data on people who become pregnant after receiving the covid vaccine, there is also no historical data suggesting that any vaccines cause fertility problems. All the vaccines that are currently authorized for emergency use for covid are non-replicating, which means they will stimulate an immune response, but will not reproduce in cells. In the US, the CDC has stated that there is no need to avoid becoming pregnant after receiving the vaccine.

External Resources:

Emily Oster is an excellent resource for breaking down the data and statistics in all kinds of parenting situations. Here are some of the recent highlights from her body of work:

Vaccines: Pregnancy and Lactation Edition (Dec 2020)

<https://emilyoster.substack.com/p/vaccines-pregnancy-and-lactation>

Which Vaccine? Should You Be Picky? (Mar 2021)

<https://emilyoster.substack.com/p/which-vaccine>

Mailbag: Update to Pregnancy and Vaccines Data (Mar 2021)

<https://emilyoster.substack.com/p/from-the-mailbag-6e1> ACOG Practice Advisory (updated regularly)

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

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (Dec 2020)

<https://www.bfmed.org/abm-statement-considerations-for-covid-19-vaccination-in-lactation>

Infant Risk Center Recommendations: (updated regularly)

<https://www.infantrisk.com/covid-19-vaccine-pregnancy-and-breastfeeding>

Forbes: Antibodies For Covid-19 Found In Breast Milk After Vaccine (Mar 2021)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ninashapiro/2021/03/04/antibodies-for-covid-19-found-in-breast-milk-after-vaccine/?sh=24f98f9e6f4e>

Refers to this study: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.02.23.21252328v2.full.pdf>

ACIP COVID-19 Vaccines Work Group interpretations of data (Oct 2020)

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/downloads/slides-2020-10/COVID-Oliver.pdf>

CDC Covid Tracker: Information on Pregnant Population (updated regularly)

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#pregnant-population>

CDC: Key Things to Know about Covid-19 Vaccines (updated regularly)

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