

Planning for your COVID-19 vaccine if pregnant, breastfeeding or thinking about getting pregnant

December 2023

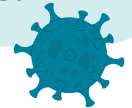


Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

How do COVID-19 vaccines help reduce the risk if you're pregnant, breastfeeding or planning to get pregnant?



COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding or who may become pregnant.

Pregnant people are at increased risk of serious illness and complications from COVID-19 infection. Vaccines can drastically reduce this risk and can be given safely at any time while trying to conceive, during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.

Evidence from around the world continues to grow and has not found any safety concerns for pregnant or breastfeeding people who were vaccinated or for their babies. Studies have shown that pregnant people who get a COVID-19 vaccine receive the same levels of protection that non-pregnant people do, and that this protection can be passed on to your baby.

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy or breastfeeding

It is important to know that:

- There are currently **no known serious risks** (such as an increased risk of miscarriage or possible birth defects) when getting a COVID-19 vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding (or providing expressed human milk) to either the person being vaccinated or the child.
- There is no need to change your breastfeeding routine or plan if you get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Note: Not everyone uses the term breastfeeding to describe their feeding experience and may prefer to use other terms such as nursing or chestfeeding.

You can use whichever terms you're most comfortable with, and you can ask that your friends, family and health-care providers use them, too.

Speak to a health care provider or call 8-1-1 to discuss your specific questions or concerns.

There are many benefits to getting a COVID-19 vaccine while you are pregnant or breastfeeding

Currently available COVID-19 vaccines are very effective in preventing people from severe COVID-19 disease.

- **Being vaccinated can help protect you from severe COVID-19 disease and reduce the risk of spreading it to others.**
- The vaccine helps your body produce antibodies that will protect you from severe COVID-19 disease if you are exposed to COVID-19. These protective antibodies pass into your milk and may also protect your baby from infection.
- Other vaccines are safely given in pregnancy or during breastfeeding, including tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis and influenza vaccines.
- The COVID-19 vaccines are safe, have no live virus and cannot cause COVID-19.
- Pregnant people who have had two or more COVID-19 vaccines are at much lower risk of hospital or ICU admission, preterm birth, and infant NICU admission for COVID-19 compared to those who have not been vaccinated.*
- If you are pregnant and you have diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, kidney, liver, lung or heart disease, are very overweight or are a smoker, you are even more likely to develop serious illness from COVID-19.

There are no known risks to getting a COVID-19 vaccine while you are pregnant or breastfeeding

The US Center for Disease Control shared evidence from studies on the safety of receiving an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy. **They did not find any safety concerns for pregnant people who were vaccinated or their babies.**

Another report looked at pregnant people enrolled in a study who were vaccinated before 20 weeks of pregnancy. There was no increased risk for miscarriage among people who received an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy.

Mild to moderate side effects are common after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine and include:

- Pain, redness or swelling at the injection site
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Fever, which in pregnancy or when breastfeeding can be managed safely by taking acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®)



What do experts currently recommend?

The BC Centre for Disease Control recommends vaccination for pregnant people because it provides protection against severe COVID-19 disease during pregnancy. Vaccination protects you, your baby and those around you.

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) recommends that pregnant or breastfeeding people should be offered the COVID-19 vaccine at any time if they have no symptoms or medical conditions preventing them from getting immunized.

The SOGC also says that a vaccination decision should be based on an individual's personal values and their understanding of the risks and benefits of getting or not getting the vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding.

Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that a complete series of COVID-19 vaccine be offered to pregnant and breastfeeding people.

How can I best protect myself and my baby during pregnancy, pregnancy planning or breastfeeding?

- 1** **Get the COVID-19 vaccine** as soon as you can through a public health clinic, pharmacy or other medical clinic offering the vaccine, as available.
- 2** **Follow prevention measures** like staying home when sick and cleaning your hands often.

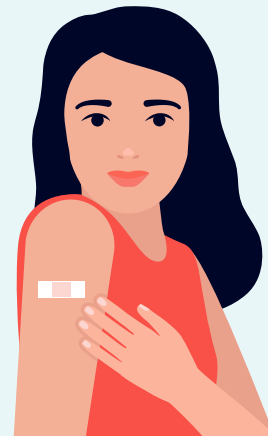
For more information

- On COVID-19 vaccines: healthlinkbc.ca/covid-19-immunization
- On pregnancy and COVID-19: pregnancyinfo.ca/covid

When and how can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

You can get a COVID-19 vaccine at any time when you are eligible.

Make sure you are registered with the **Get Vaccinated** system to keep up to date with your vaccinations.



Research opportunity: For people who get vaccinated while pregnant or breastfeeding or for those who become pregnant shortly after vaccination, you may wish to participate in a study on COVID-19 vaccination of pregnant and lactating women with the University of British Columbia: ridprogram.med.ubc.ca/vaccine-surveillance