
Information Bulletin for Healthcare Providers

COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women

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INTRODUCTION

This information bulletin provides relevant information on COVID-19 vaccination in pregnant and breastfeeding women. It also includes a link to the most recent Canadian data which provides evidence to support that pregnant women who are infected with COVID-19 are at an increased risk of hospitalization and admission to ICU. In a meta-analysis of 77 studies of pregnant and immediate postpartum women, increased maternal age, high body mass index, chronic hypertension, and pre-existing diabetes were associated with severe COVID-19 in pregnancy. Pre-existing maternal comorbidity was a risk factor for admission to an intensive care unit and invasive ventilation (Allotey et al). For 2019-2020, approximately 33% of pregnant women in New Brunswick had one or more of these comorbidities.

COVID-19 information and data are rapidly evolving and changing as the pandemic continues. For pregnant and breastfeeding women, it is important that they have the most up to date information and data in order to make an informed decision regarding the COVID-19 vaccination and whether to receive while pregnant or breastfeeding.

PerinatalNB supports pregnant and breastfeeding women being able to access the vaccine without barriers such as a letter from a healthcare provider.

Documents and reports are available by clicking on the hyperlinks.

CANADIAN REPORT

[Canadian Surveillance of COVID-19 in Pregnancy: Epidemiology, maternal and infant outcomes. Report #2 released January 15, 2021](#)

[Infographics- Canadian Surveillance of COVID-19 in Pregnancy: Epidemiology, maternal and infant outcomes](#)

CURRENT STATEMENTS

Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada:

[Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy 11 JAN 2021](#)

Consensus Statement: Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should be offered vaccination at anytime if they are eligible and no contraindications exist. This decision is based the women's personal values and an understanding that the risk of infection and/or morbidity from COVID-19 outweighs the theorized and

undescribed risk of being vaccinated during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. Women should not be precluded from vaccination based on pregnancy status or breastfeeding.

Public Health Agency of Canada- National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI)

[Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines 12 JAN 2021](#)

NACI recommends that a complete vaccine series with a COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to pregnant individuals in the authorized age group if a risk assessment deems that the benefits outweigh the potential risks for the individual and the fetus, and if informed consent includes discussion about the absence of evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in this population.

NACI recommends that a complete vaccine series with a COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to individuals in the authorized age group who are breastfeeding, if a risk assessment deems that the benefits outweigh the potential risks for the individual and the infant, and if informed consent includes discussion about the absence of evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in this population.

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

[Vaccinating Pregnant and Lactating Patients Against COVID-19- 21 DEC 2020](#)

ACOG recommends that COVID-19 vaccines should not be withheld from pregnant individuals who meet criteria for vaccination based on ACIP-recommended priority groups.

COVID-19 vaccines should be offered to lactating individuals similar to non-lactating individuals when they meet criteria for receipt of the vaccine based on prioritization groups outlined by the ACIP.

While a conversation with a clinician may be helpful, it should not be required prior to vaccination, as this may cause unnecessary barriers to access.

Society of Maternal Fetal Medicine

[Statement: SARS-CoV-2 Vaccination in Pregnancy 01 DEC 2020](#)

[Provider Considerations for Engaging in COVID-19 Vaccine Counseling 21 DEC 2020](#)

CDC

[Interim Considerations for COVID-19 Vaccination of Healthcare Personnel and Long-Term Care Facility Residents](#)

Evidence suggests that pregnant women are potentially at increased risk for severe COVID-19-associated illness and death compared to non-pregnant women, underscoring the importance of disease prevention in this population. Given the predominance of women of child-bearing potential among the healthcare workforce, a substantial number of HCP are estimated to be pregnant or breastfeeding at any given time. Currently, there are no data on the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines in these populations to inform vaccine recommendations. Further considerations around use of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant or breastfeeding HCP will be provided once data from phase III clinical trials and conditions of FDA Emergency Use Authorization are reviewed

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COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet

Information for pregnant and breastfeeding people

The information provided below and the information found in the document entitled: “COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet” will help you weigh the risks and benefits of vaccination and help you make an informed choice that is right for you. Be sure to read both documents carefully.

COVID-19 Vaccination in pregnant or breastfeeding people

For most people, getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the safest choice.

There is no evidence about whether the mRNA vaccines are safe or effective during pregnancy because the vaccines have not yet been tested in pregnant and breastfeeding people. The information below will help you make an informed decision about whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine while you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Your options

Get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is available to you

Wait for more information about the vaccine in pregnancy/breastfeeding

Decide not to get the vaccine

What are the benefits of getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Most pregnant people who become infected with COVID-19 will have mild-to-moderate symptoms and many can be asymptomatic.
- However, there is emerging data from Canada and other countries that pregnant individuals infected with COVID-19 are at increased risks for hospitalization and intensive care unit admission, especially those with underlying medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure.
- The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines prevent about 95% of COVID infections.
- Getting the vaccine can help prevent you from getting COVID and may help keep you from giving COVID-19 to people around you, like your family.
- The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. Because mRNA vaccines are not live-virus vaccines, there is no risk of infecting the fetus.

- The vaccines do not contain ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant people or their fetuses, unless you have a known allergy to one of the vaccine ingredients.
- Many vaccines are routinely given during pregnancy and are safe (for example, tetanus, diphtheria and influenza).

What are the potential risks of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine while pregnant or breastfeeding?

- Pregnant and breastfeeding people were excluded from the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna clinical trials; therefore, the vaccine has not been tested on pregnant or breastfeeding people.
- It is not known if the vaccine works as well in pregnant people as it does in non-pregnant people.
- It is also not known if there are specific or different risks for pregnant and breastfeeding people from the general population or an increased risk of miscarriage or fetal anomalies.
- There were 23 people, 12 in the vaccine arm and 11 in the placebo arm who reported pregnancies during the Pfizer-BioNTech clinical trial. They are currently following pregnancy outcomes with no report of adverse effects to date.

What about breastfeeding?

- Breastfeeding people were also excluded from trials. Therefore, there is no data on the safety of the vaccine for individuals when lactating, on the breastfed infant or on milk production.
- There is however no reason to believe that the vaccine affects the safety of breastmilk.
- The mRNA vaccines do not contain the virus therefore there is no risk of infecting the fetus.
- When we have an infection or get a vaccine, our bodies make antibodies to fight the infection. Antibodies can pass into the breastmilk and then to the baby- and may help prevent infections.

How do I decide?

Think about your own personal risk. Look at the table below and think about your risk of contracting COVID-19 and your risk of getting sick (left). Then, think about your safety and are you able to stay safe (right).

The risks of contracting and getting sick from COVID-19 are higher if:

- You are 35 years and older
- You are overweight
- You have medical problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease
- You are a smoker
- Your community has a high rate of COVID-19 infection
- You are a healthcare worker or someone at increased risk of exposure

If you are not at higher risk and:

- You are always able to wear a mask
- You and the people you live with can socially distance from others
- Your community does not have high or increasing COVID-19 cases
- You think the vaccine itself makes you nervous; you worry more about the unknown risk of the vaccine than about getting COVID-19

Whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy or while breastfeeding is your choice.

It is recommended that you talk with your healthcare provider or a healthcare professional. They can help you understand and weigh the benefits and risks of vaccination specific to you and help you make an informed personal choice.