

Information about COVID-19 Vaccines for Pregnant or Lactating Native People



Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect ourselves and our communities against severe illness, and it's also normal for pregnant people to have extra concerns regarding its safety and the protection of our future generations.

Current evidence about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy has been growing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends COVID-19 vaccination for all people aged 12 years and older, including those who are pregnant or breastfeeding.¹

If you are pregnant or lactating, you may choose to receive one of the COVID-19 vaccines that received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and/or approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

This resource provides available information on the COVID-19 vaccines in relation to pregnant people, so that you can make an informed choice about getting vaccinated for you and your baby.

How are the vaccines administered?

The Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines are administered in a series of two doses and use mRNA technology. mRNA vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19 and do not interact with our DNA in any way.²

Johnson & Johnson's Janssen (J&J) vaccine is administered in one dose and is a viral vector vaccine, meaning it uses a modified version of a different, harmless virus to deliver important instructions to our cells.²

The FDA issued an EUA for the Moderna vaccine on December 18, 2020 and an EUA for the J&J vaccine on February 27, 2021. The Pfizer vaccine received approval from the FDA on August 23, 2021.

What are the benefits to me getting vaccinated?

Clinical trials indicate that the vaccines can help protect you from COVID-19.

Being fully vaccinated may help prevent you and those around you from getting COVID-19 or becoming seriously ill as a result of COVID-19 infection.³

COVID-19 vaccines will reduce your chance of serious illness from COVID-19 infection.

This is important because people who are pregnant and infected with COVID-19 are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including illness requiring hospitalization, intensive care, need for special equipment to breathe, or illness that results in death.¹

- COVID-19-infected pregnant people may also be at an increased risk preterm birth or other negative pregnancy outcomes.¹

Current evidence about the safety of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy is reassuring.

Early data suggests that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy. However, more data is known about mRNA vaccines in pregnant persons. Current monitoring systems and studies did not find any safety concerns for pregnant people who received an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, or their babies.¹

Vaccination builds antibodies that might also protect your baby.

Early reports have shown that antibodies made in response to mRNA COVID-19 vaccines can pass to the baby through pregnancy or breastfeeding to help prevent infection.¹

What are the risks of getting the vaccine if I am pregnant?

COVID-19 vaccine efficacy and safety data are limited for pregnant people. While over 112,000 people participated in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials, including a small number of Natives, the clinical trials did not intentionally include pregnant people in their study. However, ongoing safety monitoring data has found no increased risks during pregnancy and no birth complications or identifiable risks to the unborn baby among those who received the vaccine.⁵

Most people feel side effects after receiving the vaccine. Symptoms include

- pain or swelling at the injection site.
- chills.
- fatigue.
- fever.

More pregnant people have reactions after the second dose compared to the first dose; these reactions are generally not severe. These symptoms are normal and typically resolve within a few days. CDC recommends taking Tylenol (acetaminophen) during pregnancy if you have a fever.¹

Some people experience a high fever (over 102°F) after receiving a vaccine dose, which can be dangerous during the first trimester of pregnancy.

For this reason, you may choose to delay vaccination until after your first trimester.

A rare risk of blood clots for women younger than 50 has been reported after receiving Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine. While this event is extremely rare (around seven in one million⁵), it is important to be aware of this risk. This adverse event has not been seen in either of the mRNA vaccines. For this reason, you may choose to receive the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine instead if you have the option.

If you do receive the J&J vaccine, you should be on the lookout for possible symptoms of a blood clot for three weeks after receiving the vaccine. These symptoms include

- severe or persistent headaches or blurred vision.
- shortness of breath.
- chest pain.
- leg swelling.
- persistent abdominal pain.
- easy bruising/tiny blood spots under the skin beyond the injection site.¹

Will breastfeeding be safe after I get the vaccine?

Based on what is known about the COVID-19 vaccines, there is no expected risk to lactating people or their breastfeeding babies. There is also evidence that breast milk from vaccinated persons may contain antibodies against COVID-19, which would be beneficial for babies.

Who is monitoring vaccine safety for pregnant people?

The FDA and CDC will continue to collect data on vaccine safety, conduct safety studies, and inform the public. You can also sign up for CDC's v-safe pregnancy registry at v-safe.cdc.gov to report your health information after receiving the vaccine.

Your participation will help the continued safety monitoring of the vaccine for yourself and others.

Who else can I talk to for questions/concerns?

Speaking to your primary care physician is a great resource for deciding if the vaccine is right for you.

You can also call:

- MotherToBaby at 1-866-626-6847.
- The Moderna Call Center at 1-866-MODERNA (1-866-663-3762).
- Pfizer Inc. at 1-800-438-1985.
- Janssen Biotech, Inc. at 1-800-565-4008.

References

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