

COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet Information for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women

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 women

For most people, getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the safest choice. NB Public Health has approved that all pregnant women who choose to be vaccinated received an mRNA vaccine; Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna. Please refer to the Government of New Brunswick website and the COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet for more information on mRNA vaccines.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women were not included in the initial clinical trials of these vaccines. Additional data and evidence is now available from the real-world use of COVID-19 vaccines and show that the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines are safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The information below will help you make an informed decision about whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine while you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

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

- Getting the vaccine can help prevent complications or bad outcomes for mothers and/or babies. There is data from Canada and other countries showing that pregnant individuals infected with COVID-19 are more likely to develop respiratory and other complications, and are therefore at increased risk for hospitalization and intensive care unit admission, especially those with underlying medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, and heart disease.
- Pregnant women with severe COVID-19 are at higher risk of giving birth too early in pregnancy (preterm birth), having a c-section delivery, and having a baby admitted into a neonatal intensive care unit.
- People who have received a COVID-19 vaccine were less likely to become ill with COVID-19 and protected against severe disease and death. There is evidence to show it is still possible to get and transmit COVID-19 after receiving a vaccine.

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

- Currently, there is data collected on over 35,000 pregnant women who received a mRNA vaccine. To date, there is no increased risk of adverse events or adverse pregnancy outcome in women who received mRNA vaccines. There is no known negative effects on women's fertility or the baby's development in pregnancy.
- Based on what we know about how the COVID-19 vaccines works, there is no reason to believe the vaccines would be unsafe or less safe during pregnancy.
- Some people may experience side effects from the vaccine. This is caused by the immune system's normal response to the vaccine. The most common side effects are:
 - Pain at injection site
 - Tiredness
 - Headache
 - Muscle pain
 - Chills
 - Joint pain
 - Fever

It is recommended to take acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) if you have a fever.

You are invited to participate in a Canadian registry that will track the pregnancy outcomes of individuals that receive the vaccine while pregnant. You can join here:

<https://ridprogram.med.ubc.ca/vaccine-surveillance/>

What about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy and while breastfeeding?

- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization states the mRNA vaccines are safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding and their recommendation is the same as the general adult population.
- The COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID. Because the approved vaccines are not live virus vaccines, there is no risk of infecting your baby.
- The vaccines do not contain ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant women 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)
- When we have an infection or get a vaccine, our bodies make antibodies to fight the infection. The antibodies a pregnant individual makes from the vaccine likely pass to the baby and may protect the baby from COVID-19. Antibodies can also pass into the breastmilk and then to the baby- and may help prevent infections.

It is recommended 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 choice

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

Additional resources can be found at: <https://www.pregnancyinfo.ca/covid/>