# How to decide: COVID-19 vaccination advice for women who are, or may be pregnant

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This leaflet is designed to help you make an informed choice about whether to have the COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy if it is offered to you. At present, the COVID-19 vaccine is being offered to pregnant women with certain medical conditions and to health and social care workers. We know that vaccines are effective in preventing COVID-19. Some pregnant women may become seriously unwell with COVID-19 infection, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy. There are limited data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy, but there is no evidence that the vaccines can cause harm to you or your baby.

## What should I do to help me decide?

- Make sure you know as much as you can about the vaccine and the risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy. You can ask your midwife, doctor or an immunisation nurse.
- Look up the information on the **NHS**, **government** or **professional** websites. Available evidence on the safety of vaccines in pregnancy is published by **UKTIS**, part of Public Health England.
- Look at the information below and think about your risk of catching and becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19. Are you able to reduce your chance of being exposed to COVID-19?

## What is known about COVID-19 in pregnancy?

About two-thirds of women who test positive for COVID-19 in pregnancy have no symptoms at all. In the UK, surveillance shows that approximately one in 300 pregnant women are currently being admitted to hospital with COVID-19. However, some pregnant women can get life-threatening illness from COVID-19 – particularly if they have underlying health conditions.

In the later stages of pregnancy women are at increased risk of becoming seriously unwell with COVID-19.  If this happens, it is about three times more likely that your baby will be born prematurely, which can affect their long-term health.

## What is known about the effects of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnant women?

The large trials which showed that these vaccines are safe and effective did not include pregnant women – as often happens in clinical trials. This means there is limited information about the effects of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnant women. A very small number of women became pregnant after they received the vaccine in a trial. There was no sign of problems, but the numbers are too small to be certain.

COVID-19 vaccines do not contain ingredients that are known to be harmful to pregnant women or to a developing baby. Studies of the vaccines in animals to look at the effects on pregnancy have shown no evidence that the vaccine causes harm to the pregnancy or fertility. The COVID-19 vaccines that we are using in the UK are not 'live' vaccines and so cannot cause COVID-19 infection in you or your baby.

## Does it matter what stage of pregnancy I am in?

The vaccine should work whatever the stage of pregnancy you are in. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that women do not need a pregnancy test before vaccination, and that women planning a pregnancy do not need to delay pregnancy after vaccination. However, as COVID-19 has more serious complications in later pregnancy, some women may choose to delay their vaccine until after the first 12 weeks (which are most important for the baby's development) and will plan to have the first dose at any time from 13 weeks onwards.

## Will having a COVID-19 vaccination affect my work?

No vaccine is 100% effective, and it is not yet known whether it will stop you passing on the virus. So, having a vaccine will not change your occupational risk assessment. This includes advice that you should not work in high-risk areas if you have another serious medical condition, or if you are beyond 28 weeks' gestation. You will still need to follow the advice in your workplace and at home:
- practice social distancing
- wear a face mask as necessary
- wash your hands carefully and frequently

# The information below will help you to think about your decision to have the vaccine if you are pregnant and are eligible for vaccination

## You are at higher risk of catching COVID-19 if:

- ☐ you or someone in your household is a health or social care worker or works in a care home
- ☐ your community has a high or increasing rate of COVID infections
- ☐ you have frequent contact with people outside your home
- ☐ you are not able to comply with social distancing for the rest of your pregnancy
- ☐ you live in a crowded household
- ☐ you are of Black, Asian or in another minority ethnicity group

## You are at higher risk of becoming unwell with COVID-19 if:

- ☐ You have underlying medical conditions such as immune problems, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or asthma
- ☐ You are overweight
- ☐ You are over the age 35
- ☐ You are in your third trimester of pregnancy (over 28 weeks)

## What should I do if I am offered a COVID-19 vaccine?

- If you are at higher risk of catching COVID-19, you should consider getting the vaccine
- If you are at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell if you do catch COVID-19, you should consider getting the vaccine
- If you have further questions or are unsure, you should have a discussion with a midwife, immunisation nurse, pharmacist or doctor

Further information, Q&As, and the latest version of this leaflet are available at **rcog.org.uk/coronavirus-pregnancy.**