

Editorial

Are Vaccines Safe during Pregnancy ?

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Certain vaccines are safe and recommended for women before, during, and after pregnancy to help keep them and their babies healthy. The antibodies mothers develop in response to these vaccines not only protect them, but also cross the placenta and help protect their babies from serious diseases early in life. Vaccinating during pregnancy also helps protect a mother from getting a serious disease and then giving it to her newborn.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that pregnant women get two vaccines during every pregnancy: the inactivated flu vaccine (the injection, not the live nasal flu vaccine) and the Tdap vaccine.

Some vaccines, especially live vaccines, should not be given to pregnant women because they may be harmful to the baby. As we know that vaccine recommendations for pregnant women are developed with the highest safety concerns for both mothers and babies.¹

Some vaccines are not recommended during pregnancy, such as: Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine; Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine; Live influenza vaccine (nasal flu vaccine); Varicella (chicken pox) vaccine. Certain travel vaccines: yellow fever, typhoid fever, and Japanese encephalitis. These travel vaccines should generally not be given during pregnancy, unless it is determined that the benefits outweigh the risks. In case of breastfeeding, it is safe to receive routine vaccines right after giving birth, even while you are breastfeeding. However, yellow fever vaccine is not recommended for breastfeeding women unless travel to certain countries is unavoidable and a healthcare provider determines that the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks.

Pregnant women are at higher risk of getting severe Covid and delivering premature babies. In situations where there is a lot of Covid-19 transmission in the country and a woman is exposed to it, or if she's in a profession like a health care worker or a frontline worker where she's at especially high risk of acquiring the infection, the benefits of getting the vaccine definitely outweigh the risks. Particularly since the platforms that we used currently for vaccines are the mRNA platform, inactivated viruses or the viral vectored platforms or subunit proteins. None of them have a live virus that can multiply within the body and that could potentially create a problem. So, it's important that pregnant women in every country be explained the benefits versus the risks and be offered the vaccine if they would like to take it. And it's probably the right thing to do in many situations, where the pregnant woman is at higher risk of getting the infection and where the vaccines would bring more benefits²

CDC recommends that people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future be vaccinated and stay up to date with their Covid-19 vaccines, including getting a Covid-19 booster shot when it's time to get one. Evidence shows that Covid-19 vaccination during pregnancy is safe and effective^{3,4} CDC recommendations align with those from professional medical organizations serving people who are pregnant, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine, and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, along with many other professional medical organizations.¹

REFERENCES

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