



The COVID-19 vaccine
Information for anyone who
is planning a pregnancy,
pregnant or breastfeeding



Having the COVID-19 vaccine is strongly recommended if you are planning for a baby, already pregnant or breastfeeding, to help protect yourself and your baby from the virus.

Pregnant women are more at risk of becoming seriously unwell if they catch COVID-19, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy or at any stage of pregnancy if they have underlying health conditions. Pregnant women who become very sick with the virus are also more likely to be

hospitalised and suffer complications such as premature birth and still birth.

If you are unsure about whether or not to have the COVID-19 vaccine, please speak to your consultant or midwife to discuss your personal circumstances and ensure you have the latest information and advice.

To help you make a decision, here are answers to some of the most common questions people have about the vaccine.

Pregnancy

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for pregnant women?

Yes. Having the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for pregnant women. More than 200,000 pregnant women in the UK and USA alone have had the COVID-19 vaccine already without any safety concerns being raised.

The COVID-19 vaccine is not a live vaccine. It cannot give you or your baby COVID-19. Although the vaccine itself is new, non-live vaccines such as flu and whooping cough, have been used safely in pregnant women for many years.

What are the particular risks for pregnant women if they catch COVID-19?

Pregnant women with COVID-19 are more likely to need intensive care than women of the same age who are not pregnant.

Women with COVID-19 are also two to three times more likely to have their babies early than women without COVID-19 and twice as likely to have a stillbirth.

Being very unwell with COVID-19 also increases the chance of you needing an emergency C-section. There is a greater risk the more pregnant you are.

Can I have the vaccine at any time during my pregnancy?

The vaccine is considered to be safe and effective at any stage of pregnancy.

For over 18s, two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine are needed to give you maximum protection against infection.

Second doses are given 8 weeks after the first dose and it is recommended that you receive two doses before giving birth, or before you enter the third trimester, when the risk to you and your baby is greatest.

What might the side effects be of having the vaccine?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause some common mild side effects. With the COVID-19 vaccine, some people experience:

- A sore arm
- Feeling very tired
- A headache
- General aches or flu-like symptoms

Not everyone gets side effects but if you have other children or dependents to look after you may want to plan to have some help from family or friends on standby for the few days after you have your vaccine.



Jasmine Leonce
Consultant Obstetrician

Does the vaccine pass through the placenta to my baby?

The vaccine doesn't pass to your baby. The protective antibodies you develop after having the vaccine CAN be passed through the placenta, so your baby may have greater immunity against COVID-19 when they are born.

Why are pregnant women now being encouraged to have the jab, when at first they were told not to?

At the start of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in this country, vaccines were mostly

being offered by age, with older people receiving their vaccine first. Since then, as the programme has expanded, there is more safety data available for pregnant women.

Based on this evidence, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised in April this year, that pregnant women should be offered the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines alongside the rest of the population.

Charlotte and baby Theo



Breastfeeding

Can I still breastfeed? Does the vaccine pass through breastmilk to my baby?

Yes, you can absolutely still continue to breastfeed if you have the vaccine. The Royal College of Midwives has confirmed that there is no plausible way in which any vaccine ingredient could pass to your baby through breast milk.

Vaccinated mothers can pass protective antibodies to their babies through

their breast milk which could help build their immunity against COVID-19.


Can I restart breastfeeding if I stopped after having the vaccine?

You are able to re-stimulate your milk supply if you stopped breastfeeding after having the vaccine but it is best to talk to your midwife or healthcare professional for advice on your own circumstances to ensure you get the support you need.



*Chloe and
baby Malakai*

*Verity and
baby Vida*



Helen and
baby Isabel

What if I feel unwell after having the vaccine and need to care for my baby?

Taking paracetamol and drinking plenty of fluids will keep you hydrated and may help alleviate symptoms. Paracetamol can be taken as per normal guidance when pregnant or breastfeeding.

You might want to have your vaccine when someone is around to help you care

for your baby and bring them to you for feeding. If you usually express milk, you could express some extra ahead of time in case you want to use it.

Remember that missing feeds may lower your supply and could lead to blocked ducts or mastitis, so if this happens you might want to express to maintain your supply if you are unable to safely feed your baby.

Fertility

Does the COVID-19 vaccine affect fertility?

The British Fertility Society states there is absolutely no evidence, and no theoretical reason, that any of the vaccines can affect the fertility of women or men. This includes whether you are trying on your own or having fertility treatment.

Can I have the vaccine if I'm having fertility treatment?

Yes you can have it before or during your treatment. The British Fertility Society advises talking to your medical team about the timing of the vaccine during treatment, to take into account common side effects of the jab like tiredness or headaches, so you can separate the date of vaccination by a few days from some treatment procedures.

More information

To find out more about the vaccine, including local vaccine centres, visit: <https://covid.healthierfuture.org.uk>

Information for this leaflet has been sourced from:

www.nhs.uk

Royal College of Midwives: www.rcm.org.uk

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists: www.rcog.org.uk

British Fertility Society: www.britishfertilitysociety.org.uk/covid