

COVID-19 Vaccine:

for Individuals Who are Planning to get Pregnant,
Currently Pregnant or Breastfeeding

Public Health Factsheet

September 2022

Manitoba 

Immunization is one of the most important accomplishments in public health. Over the past 50 years, immunization has led to the elimination, containment and control of disease that were once very common in Canada¹. Vaccines help our immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

What are the risks of getting COVID-19 during pregnancy?

There is strong evidence that pregnant people are more likely to become severely ill if they get COVID-19. This may result in a higher risk of hospitalization and admission to an intensive care unit (ICU). COVID-19 infection during pregnancy is also associated with increased risks to the baby. This may include preterm birth, low birthweight and admission to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

Like everyone else, pregnant people need to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19, seek appropriate testing and call their health care provider if they develop symptoms.

Is it safe to receive a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy?

Yes. Current evidence shows that it is safe for pregnant people to receive COVID-19 mRNA vaccines (Pfizer/ComirnatyTM and Moderna/SpikevaxTM) during any trimester. The rate of side effects after getting the vaccine is the same for both pregnant and non-pregnant people. Vaccination does not increase the risk for miscarriage, stillbirth, low birth weight, preterm birth or neonatal intensive care admission.

Should individuals who are pregnant or breastfeeding get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. People who are pregnant or breastfeeding should receive a primary series of a COVID-19 vaccine. The primary series could be two or three doses, depending on someone's health status. Pregnant or breastfeeding individuals should also receive a fall booster dose.

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy is effective at protecting against severe disease, hospitalization, ICU admission, and death from COVID-19 infection. As well, infants of people who were vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy experienced lower rates of Delta and Omicron infection in the first four to six months of life compared to infants born to individuals who were unvaccinated.

Which COVID-19 vaccine should pregnant individuals receive?

The bivalent mRNA vaccine is the recommended product for booster doses in those who are 18 years of age and older. This is because it targets the original and Omicron strains of the COVID-19 virus. It provides broad protection against more variants.

The monovalent (original) mRNA vaccine should be used for people who have not previously been vaccinated against COVID-19 for their primary series (two or three doses). The monovalent vaccine is also still available as a booster dose for those who are less than 18 years of age or who do not want to receive the bivalent vaccine.

Other vaccines can be administered on the same day, or any time before or after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

¹The Public Health Agency of Canada

Should individuals who are planning to become pregnant get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is strongly recommended for people who are planning a pregnancy. Those intending to become pregnant don't need to delay pregnancy after vaccination with an mRNA vaccine.

Millions of people have received an mRNA vaccine in Canada and around the world. Data has shown no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause fertility problems in women or men. This includes no difference in:

- pregnancy rates
- ectopic pregnancies (pregnancy that develops outside the uterus)
- miscarriages
- ovarian function
- number of fertilized embryos

How do pregnant individuals generally respond to vaccines?

In general, pregnant individuals have the same immune response to a vaccine as non-pregnant individuals. This means they can generate the same amount of protective antibodies after being vaccinated.

There is an initial period of inflammation after being vaccinated as the immune system responds to a foreign substance. Common side effects include a sore arm, fatigue, headache and occasional low-grade fever. In general, pregnant individuals have a slightly decreased inflammatory response and often report fewer side effects.

For more information

Speak with your health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, call Health Links – Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll free in Manitoba).

Or, access the following websites:

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada: www.sogc.org/

Manitoba Health: www.manitoba.ca/covid19/index.html

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization: www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci.html
