

Vaccine safety in pregnancy

Whooping cough, flu and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended and safe to get during pregnancy.

Like any other medication, vaccines can have side effects. Most reactions are mild, short lasting and do not require special treatment.

For further information and advice about immunisation and pregnancy, speak to your midwife, doctor or immunisation provider.

Alternatively visit the Immunisation and Pregnancy page on the SA Health website:
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation

Reference:

Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), Australian Immunisation Handbook, Australian Government Department of Health

immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au

For more information

Immunisation Section SA Health
PO Box 6 Rundle Mall
Adelaide SA 5000
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation



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Immunisation and pregnancy



BEFORE PREGNANCY

It is important to be up to date with certain immunisations before pregnancy to reduce the risk of birth defects or miscarriage.

Remind people who may be in contact with your baby to check their immunisations are up to date, especially flu and whooping cough.

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)

It is important to be protected against rubella (German measles) because it can cause serious birth defects if you become infected during pregnancy.

Speak to your doctor about having a blood test to check if you are protected or get two doses of the MMR vaccine. You should avoid becoming pregnant for 28 days after vaccination.

Chickenpox (varicella)

If you become infected with chickenpox while pregnant, you can become seriously ill. It can cause birth defects or severe chickenpox infection for your newborn baby.

Speak to your doctor about having a blood test to check if you are protected or get two doses of the chickenpox vaccine. You should avoid becoming pregnant for 28 days after vaccination.

Hepatitis B

If you have hepatitis B infection, you can pass the virus to your newborn at or near the time of birth. Having the hepatitis B vaccine before becoming pregnant can offer protection.

Speak to your doctor about having a blood test to check if you are protected or get vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Pneumococcal

Pneumococcal bacteria can cause several serious infections. Talk to your doctor about pneumococcal vaccination if you are at higher risk, including if you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or if you have a condition such as diabetes or chronic heart, lung or kidney disease.

DURING PREGNANCY

Whooping cough, flu and COVID-19 are all easily spread through airborne transmission when infected people talk, cough or sneeze. COVID-19 and flu can also be spread through contact with contaminated objects.

Whooping cough, flu and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended to protect you and your baby.

COVID-19

Most people who are infected with COVID-19 during pregnancy will either have no or mild symptoms. However, you may be at an increased risk of severe disease and your baby may be at risk of being born prematurely and/or via caesarean section or being admitted to a newborn care unit.

The best way to reduce your risk is to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations. Antibodies from the COVID-19 vaccine have been shown to cross the placenta, which helps protect the newborn baby during their first few months.

COVID-19 vaccines can be given at any stage during pregnancy if you are not up to date, and at the same time as the flu and whooping cough vaccines.

Flu (influenza)

You are more likely to have severe illness from flu during pregnancy due to changes to your immune system. Complications can include pneumonia and premature labour. Babies under six months of age are more likely to be hospitalised with flu than other age groups.

The flu vaccine can be safely given at any stage during pregnancy and is the best way to protect you and your baby in their first few months.

Whooping Cough (pertussis)

Whooping cough affects the lungs and airways and can cause serious complications, including brain damage, pneumonia and sometimes death, particularly in newborn babies.

Babies who are too young to be fully immunised have the highest risk of infection and severe illness.

Immunisation during pregnancy helps protect you and reduces the risk of infection in young infants by over 90%. By getting vaccinated during pregnancy, you can pass on antibodies through the placenta to help protect your baby in their first few months.

The vaccine can be safely given at any time but **is best given between 20 and 32 weeks**. If you have not received the vaccine by 32 weeks, speak to your midwife, doctor or immunisation provider to receive the vaccine as soon as possible before delivery.



*These vaccines are free for eligible people.**

Talk to your midwife, doctor or immunisation provider about getting the recommended vaccines.

**Your doctor may charge a consultation fee*