



THE VACCINES YOU NEED DURING PREGNANCY

Vaccines are an essential part of healthcare, including during pregnancy. Prenatal vaccines protect the baby and their birthing parent, who are both at greater risk if infected with a vaccine-preventable disease. Before becoming pregnant, it is important to ensure you are up to date with all recommended vaccines. After getting certain vaccines, you should wait a short time before becoming pregnant.

Once pregnant, there are certain vaccines you'll want to get to ensure both you and your baby stay healthy. In pregnancy, vaccines transfer antibodies that fight infection to the baby. This process is called passive immunity and provides newborns immediate protection after birth and through their first few months of life. Read on to learn which vaccines are recommended during pregnancy and when.

COVID-19

COVID-19 vaccines reduce the severity of infection and decrease the likelihood of hospitalization or death. This holds true especially during pregnancy. Pregnant people who become infected with COVID-19 are more likely to have preterm births than non-infected pregnant people. COVID-19 infection during pregnancy can also result in low birth weight. COVID-19 vaccines are safe for pregnant people and can drastically reduce those unwanted outcomes and also reduce infant hospitalization. Vaccination against COVID-19 during pregnancy will protect the pregnant parent and their baby during their first 6 months of life when they are too young to be vaccinated themselves.

Influenza (flu)

Flu infection can be severe in anyone, even in healthy individuals. Like COVID-19, flu infection is more likely to result in hospitalization or life-threatening illness in pregnant people than in non-pregnant people. Flu infection during pregnancy can further result in preterm labor and preterm birth. Infants are not eligible for the flu vaccine until 6 months of age, so getting the flu shot while pregnant protects them from flu until they can get vaccinated themselves.

Flu season typically lasts from October to May in the U.S. and pregnant people can be vaccinated at any time throughout pregnancy. Pregnant people should not receive the nasal spray flu vaccine and should opt for the shot instead. The nasal spray vaccine contains a live, weakened form of the flu virus, which can cause complications. The flu shot is made from an inactivated virus and is completely safe.

Tdap

The Tdap vaccine protects against three diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). Regardless of vaccination history, pregnant people need to receive the Tdap vaccine during every pregnancy between 27 and 36 weeks. This protects infants immediately after birth and through the first few months of life. Whooping cough affects people of all ages, but can be deadly in infants and young children. Babies cannot receive the DTaP vaccine (the children's vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) until they are 2 months of age. They do not have substantial protection until at least 6 months of age and have received three doses. This is why the Tdap vaccine in pregnancy is so important.

Immunity from Tdap and DTaP vaccines wanes over time. Parents of newborns will want to ensure everyone who comes into close contact with their infant is up to date with these and all other recommended vaccines. (Adults should receive a Tdap vaccine every 10 years.)

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

RSV is a common virus that typically causes mild, cold-like symptoms. For certain populations, RSV can be deadly. These include older adults, infants, and young children. In fact, RSV is a leading cause of infant hospitalization. RSV typically circulates from September to January and pregnant people should receive one dose of the RSV vaccine, Abrysvo, during those months and between 32–36 weeks of pregnancy. If a birthing parent did not receive Abrysvo while pregnant, their infant should get the monoclonal antibody product, nirsevimab, during their first RSV season at up to 8 months of age. If you already received an RSV vaccine during a past pregnancy, you do not need to get vaccinated again in future pregnancies, but your child should receive the monoclonal antibody treatment.

Other Prenatal Vaccine Considerations

Some people need to receive vaccines after giving birth and prior to leaving the hospital. This could be due to disease status or because they are missing recommended vaccines based on age. It takes a couple of weeks for the postpartum parent to generate antibodies and be protected. If breastfeeding, protection from these antibodies will pass on to the baby. It is safe and beneficial to receive vaccines after birth, when nursing.

If you are exposed to certain germs, or if you are at high risk for infection, your provider may also recommend other vaccinations during pregnancy.

Certain vaccines should not be given during pregnancy. These include the nasal flu mist vaccine (mentioned above), MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), varicella (chickenpox), IPV (inactivated polio vaccine), MenB (meningitis B), and HPV (human papillomavirus).

If you have questions about vaccines during pregnancy, please talk to your healthcare provider.