# Vaccines and Pregnancy



Some infections during pregnancy can be harmful to a pregnant person and their developing baby. That is why getting vaccinated against certain diseases before, during, and after pregnancy are important.

## Before Pregnancy

Before becoming pregnant, discuss plans to grow your family with your healthcare provider. You should review your immunization record to ensure you've received all recommended vaccines. If you need certain vaccines like some travel vaccines, HPV, MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), rubella, and varicella (chickenpox), you will need to wait to get pregnant for a short period of time.

### Why do doctors not give certain vaccines before and during pregnancy?

Some vaccines contain live, weakened forms of the virus or bacteria which could, in theory, infect the growing baby. So, doctors avoid giving them during pregnancy out of an abundance of caution. Still, research shows that even when a vaccine is given right before or during early pregnancy, it does not result in harm to the baby, nor birth defects.

## After Pregnancy

It is both safe and beneficial to receive vaccines after birth, even when nursing. It is also important for everyone who has regular contact with your newborn to be vaccinated against diseases such as influenza (flu), pertussis (whooping cough), and COVID. This can help surround the infant with a "cocoon" of protection against the disease until the baby is old enough to be immunized.

## During Pregnancy

While pregnant, your body is working double time to support both you and your growing little one. Getting sick with some diseases during pregnancy means you're at increased risk for hospitalization and other complications. Getting recommended vaccines during pregnancy helps protect you and your baby. Vaccines you get during pregnancy can even protect your baby after they are born. Vaccines recommended during pregnancy include: influenza (flu), Tdap, RSV, and COVID-19.

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## 1 Influenza (flu)

**Why Vaccinate?**

People who catch the flu during pregnancy have a greater chance of severe illness. There are also risks for the unborn baby, including preterm birth. The flu vaccine protects you both. Your flu vaccine helps you pass protective antibodies to your baby, protecting them in their first months of life before they can get vaccinated at 6 months. Getting the flu shot can reduce your risk of flu by 50%; it also decreases your risk of hospitalization if you do catch it.

**Vaccine Recommendations**

You should get the flu shot before the end of October. It is safe to get at any point during pregnancy. Pregnant people should not get a live-virus version of the flu shot.

## 2 Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis)

**Why Vaccinate?**

The Tdap vaccine protects against three diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). Tdap vaccination during pregnancy is important because babies cannot be vaccinated against these diseases until they're 2 months old. Immunity passed from parent to baby is important to protect them from these diseases in their first months of life. Infants are especially at risk for severe complications from pertussis.

**Vaccine Recommendations**

The Tdap vaccine is recommended during every pregnancy between 27 and 36 weeks, regardless of whether you've had the vaccine previously. This allows antibodies to be passed to the baby so they are protected after birth.

## 3 RSV

**Why Vaccinate?**

For infants and young children, RSV infection can be dangerous and even deadly. In fact, RSV is the leading cause of hospitalization for infants in the U.S.

**Vaccine Recommendations**

Two options protect babies under 8 months from RSV: **1.** Abrysvo, an RSV vaccine, is given to pregnant people between 32 and 36 weeks pregnant between September and January. Protection starts immediately and lasts around 6 months. **2.** Monoclonal antibody treatments provide a direct infusion of antibodies to your baby. These are given during a baby's first RSV season. Talk to your healthcare provider to see which option is best for you.

## 4 COVID

**Why Vaccinate?**

Pregnant people and their babies are at increased risk of severe COVID illness. Getting a COVID vaccine every year can drastically reduce the risk of hospitalization for you and your baby.

**Vaccine Recommendations**

You should receive an updated COVID vaccine each year in the fall.

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