

Vaccines and Pregnancy:

Answers to Common Questions



It is normal to have questions about vaccines for yourself and your baby. Knowing what immunizations are right for you and understanding how they can help you to stay healthy during your pregnancy are important to your self-care. Below are some common questions about vaccines during pregnancy that can help you learn more about how to safely protect yourself and your baby from disease.

1. Why are maternal vaccines an important part of prenatal care?

Maternal vaccines help to protect mom and baby from potentially serious illnesses during pregnancy and for the first several months of the baby's life when they are too young to be vaccinated.

Staying up to date on recommended vaccines is one way for moms to practice self-care during their pregnancy.

2. Which vaccines are recommended during pregnancy and why?

Tdap vaccine: recommended each pregnancy during weeks 27-36 to protect your baby against whooping cough in the first months after birth. Whooping cough can be life threatening for infants and about one-third of infants with this infection are hospitalized.¹

Flu vaccine: recommended during flu season – whether that falls before or during your pregnancy – to protect both mom and baby against severe illness from flu. Catching the flu during pregnancy can increase risk of complications, including premature labor and delivery.²

RSV vaccine: recommended in weeks 32-36 during respiratory season (September through January) to protect your baby from getting very sick with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). RSV is the leading cause of hospitalization in infants under 1 year of age.³

COVID-19 vaccine: updated vaccines continue to be recommended for anyone pregnant, recently pregnant, considering pregnancy, or lactating.⁴ COVID-19 infection during pregnancy can increase the risk of complications that can affect mom and baby.

3. Are vaccines during pregnancy safe for my baby?

Scientific research has shown that the benefits of vaccination during pregnancy outweigh risks. Inactivated vaccines, or vaccines that do not contain live virus, like Tdap, flu, RSV, are safe to be given during pregnancy. Live virus vaccines, like MMR and chickenpox, should be given before or after pregnancy.⁵

4. Are there vaccines that I should get before I become pregnant, or after I give birth?

Your provider may recommend some vaccinations before pregnancy, such as the MMR vaccine if you did not receive it during childhood.⁶ Your provider may also talk to you about vaccines after you deliver.

5. Is it safe to get a vaccine while breastfeeding?

Vaccines are safe during breastfeeding and may even give your baby added protection. If you missed some vaccines before or during pregnancy, you can still get them after giving birth, even if you are breastfeeding.⁷

6. Are there any side effects that are specific to vaccines during pregnancy?

Vaccines, like any medicine, can have some side effects, but most people who get vaccinated have no or mild side effects. People who are pregnant have not reported different side effects from people who are not pregnant.

7. What are the risks if I get sick with a vaccine-preventable disease during pregnancy?

Pregnant women are at increased risk of severe illness from certain infectious diseases, including COVID-19 and flu. When infected, pregnant moms can become much sicker than when not pregnant,⁸ which can lead to complications for both mom and baby, including preterm birth, preeclampsia, or high blood pressure.⁹

8. What do vaccines cost?

Vaccines recommended during pregnancy are covered at no cost by most commercial and public insurance plans. You can call the phone number on the back of your insurance card to ask about your coverage for recommended prenatal vaccines. If you are pregnant and don't currently have health insurance, you may be eligible for Medicaid coverage.¹⁰ In most cases, Medicaid will cover recommended vaccines at no cost to the patient.¹¹

Check out these resources for more information:

✓ www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/vaccine-safety-during-pregnancy

✓ www.vaccinateyourfamily.org/pregnancy

Visit BestStart4BabyandMom.com to learn more!

Vaccines for Your Baby:

Answers to Common Questions

As parents and caregivers, we all want to keep our children as healthy as possible. Vaccines play a big part in helping keep children safe from serious illness.

Below are some common questions about vaccines for your baby. Your health care provider can help answer these questions and more.

1. Why do vaccines start so early on in life?

The vaccine schedule starts early in life to protect children from life-threatening illnesses before they could encounter the diseases. These vaccines have been recommended and given to children for decades to keep them safe from serious illness in the early stages of life.

2. Why are there multiple doses needed for some vaccines?

Some vaccines require more than one dose to build high enough immunity to prevent disease or to boost immunity that can fade with time. Other vaccines protect against germs that change over time, like the flu. Every dose is important because it protects against diseases that can be particularly harmful to young children.

3. Are there any side effects I should look out for in my baby?

Vaccines, like any medicine, can have some side effects. Some mild side effects in infants are soreness at the injection site, fussiness, or low-grade fever. These side effects are normal and should only last a day or two.

4. Is there a link between vaccines and autism?

No, numerous scientific studies continue to show no relationship between vaccines or vaccine ingredients and autism.¹²

5. What happens if I fall behind on my child's immunizations?

Speak with your child's provider about staying up to date on recommended vaccines. Young children have the highest risk of severe disease, so delaying a vaccine can leave them unprotected at a time when they need protection the most.

6. What do vaccines for my baby cost?

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides vaccines to children whose parent or guardian may not be able to afford them. Any child who is 18 years or younger can get free vaccines if they meet one of these requirements:¹³

- Receives health insurance through Medicaid or PeachCare for Kids Program
- Underinsured (your child has health insurance, but it doesn't cover certain recommended vaccines)
- Uninsured (no health insurance coverage)
- American Indian or Alaska Native

A VFC provider cannot refuse vaccination for an eligible child due to the parent's or guardian's inability to pay for vaccine administration.



BEST START FOR
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Check out these resources for more information:

- ✓ healthychildren.org/immunizationschedules
- ✓ vaccinateyourfamily.org

Visit BestStart4BabyandMom.com to learn more!