COVID-19 vaccination
A guide for all women who are planning a pregnancy, or who are pregnant or breastfeeding
December 2021

COVID-19 vaccination is strongly recommended for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the UK have been shown to be effective and have a good safety record. It is important that pregnant women are fully vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and their babies.

What is the advice about COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert group, has advised that pregnant women are more at risk of serious consequences from COVID-19 disease. It is important that pregnant women are fully vaccinated as soon as possible. They should not delay vaccination until after they have given birth. This is to protect them and their babies.

Hundreds of thousands of pregnant women have been vaccinated with Pfizer or Moderna vaccines in the UK and no safety issues have been identified. Vaccination is very effective in preventing severe COVID-19 disease. These vaccines do not contain live coronavirus and cannot infect a pregnant woman or her unborn baby in the womb.

Anyone who has already started vaccination and is offered a second dose whilst pregnant should have a second dose with the same vaccine unless they had a serious side effect after the first dose.

What are the risks of COVID-19 disease in pregnancy?

If you have COVID-19 disease in the later stages of pregnancy both you and your baby are more likely to have severe illness and need hospital treatment and intensive care support. UK data has shown that almost every pregnant woman with COVID-19 disease who needed hospital treatment or intensive care, had not been vaccinated.

Pregnant women with the following underlying medical conditions are at a higher risk of suffering serious complications from COVID-19 disease:

- immune problems
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- severe asthma

Or if you are:
- overweight
- over the age 35
- in your third trimester or pregnancy (over 28 weeks)
- of Black or Asian minority ethnic background

- unvaccinated or partially vaccinated

The overall risk from COVID-19 disease for you and your new baby is low but has increased since the first waves of COVID-19.

What does that mean for me?

If you are pregnant, get vaccinated as soon as possible. You need two doses given at least 8 weeks apart. If you have already had the first two doses you need to have a booster dose at least 3 months after the second dose.

COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy give you high levels of protection against disease.

You are encouraged to read the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists' decision aid at this link: www.rcog.org.uk/covid-vaccine. The information in this aid can help you make an informed decision. If you have any further questions speak to your midwife or GP.

Can I have the vaccine if I am breastfeeding?

The benefits of breastfeeding are well known. The expert advice from the JCVI and World Health Organization (WHO) is that the vaccine can be given to women who are breastfeeding. If you are breastfeeding, or planning to breastfeed, you can continue breastfeeding after you have been vaccinated.

The vaccine and fertility

You do not need to avoid getting pregnant after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination.

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccines have any effect your fertility or your chance of becoming pregnant.

Does the vaccine have side effects?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. This is because vaccines work by triggering a response in your immune system. Most of these are mild and only last a few days, and not everyone gets them.

Please read the 'What to expect after your COVID-19 vaccination leaflet' available here: phw.nhs.wales/covid-vaccine-what-to-expect/

What do I need to do?

You will be told about when and where to get vaccinated. On the day of the appointment, wear practical clothing so it's easy to reach the top of your arm. If you have a fear of needles or feel anxious, let the person giving you the vaccine know. They will be understanding and support you.

It is important to have all doses of the vaccine to give you the best longer-term protection. Keep your card safe and make sure you get your second dose and then booster.

![Mae Brechu yn achub bywydau / Vaccination saves lives]

What should I do if I am unwell on the day of my appointment?

If you are unwell, it is better to wait until you have recovered to have your vaccine, but you should try to have it as soon as possible.

You should not attend a vaccine appointment if you are self-isolating or waiting for a COVID-19 test or within four weeks of having a positive COVID-19 test.

Do I still need to follow the guidance if I have had a vaccine?

No vaccines are 100% effective so you MUST still follow any national or local restrictions and:

• when advised wear a face mask
• wash your hands carefully and regularly
• open windows to let fresh air in
• follow the current guidance at gov.wales/coronavirus.

Remember:
COVID-19 is spread through droplets breathed out from the nose or mouth, particularly when speaking or coughing. It can also be picked up by touching your eyes, nose and mouth after touching contaminated objects and surfaces.
If you have any questions or want more information, you can visit 111.wales.nhs.uk, talk to your doctor or midwife or call NHS 111 Wales.

If 111 is not available in your area, please call 0845 46 47. Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute (plus your telephone provider's usual charge).

More information

You can find out more information about COVID-19 vaccines, including their contents and possible side effects at: coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/productinformation.

Further information and patient leaflets can be found at: phw.nhs.wales/covid-19-vaccination.

You can report suspected side effects online at coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit: 111.wales.nhs.uk/AboutUs/Yourinformation.

For other formats of this leaflet visit: publichealthwales.org/HealthInformationResources.