

Covid Vaccination and Pregnancy Guide for Barnsley Health Professionals-August 2021

Whilst the overall risk from COVID-19 disease in pregnant women and their new babies is low, during later pregnancy some women may become seriously unwell and require hospital treatment. We have seen this across the country, where the overwhelming majority of pregnant women hospitalised with the virus have not had a jab. As a result, it is increasingly important that we, as health professionals, are all making every contact count across the borough, to reduce the risk from COVID -19 disease during pregnancy.

We recognise that information and evidence around COVID-19 vaccination has been updated throughout the pandemic, and this has perhaps caused hesitancy for both patients and healthcare professionals. Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent, Chief Midwifery Officer for England, has written to fellow midwives and GP practices across the country stressing the need to encourage pregnant women to get the jab to protect them and their baby. ([NHS England, July 2021](#)).

We are asking all professionals to make every contact count:

- Initiate conversations about the vaccination.
- Sign-post appropriately to vaccination clinics.
- Make recommendations based on up-to-date guidance and evidence.
- Support pregnant women and partners to make informed decisions.



Key information for Healthcare Professionals:

- Lots of ways to book: Women can book their vaccination appointment online at nhs.uk/covidvaccine, by calling 119 or attend one of the walk-in sessions.
- Vaccine can be given at any stage, have conversations early: The COVID-19 vaccines can be given at any time in pregnancy, but women should be encouraged to do so as early as possible, to ensure maximum protection in the third trimester.
- Different 1st and 2nd doses? Pregnant women (any age) will be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (Moderna is also available at certain sites outside of Barnsley) unless they have already had one dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, in which case they should complete the course with Oxford-AstraZeneca, regardless of the time between the first and second dose. Where a woman has a clinical need to swap to an alternative second vaccination or having the AZ as a 2nd dose is a barrier to them having the vaccine, they should have this conversation with their GP to get a signed patient-specific directive form which they can then take to the vaccine centre.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) Coronavirus Vaccination in Pregnancy Information for Healthcare Professionals provides some fantastic top tips and up to date evidence for health professionals to support women and their partners to make informed decisions about COVID-19 vaccination. It is advised that you read the full document links can be found below.

The RCOG advises that during contact with pregnant women you may cover the following points:

The options available to the pregnant woman:

- To receive vaccination against COVID-19 now, women can have the vaccine at any point throughout pregnancy.
- To decline the vaccine, with the option of having it in future (either later in her pregnancy or after the birth of her baby) or once more information about the vaccine is available.
- To decline to have the vaccine altogether; this is a woman's individual choice.



The benefits of vaccination:

- Reduction in severe COVID disease for a pregnant woman.
- Potential reduction in the risk of preterm birth associated with COVID-19.
- Pregnant women should be supported, if necessary, to come to an informed decision about vaccination.
- An informed decision-making process should cover the options for the timing of vaccination, the benefits and risks of vaccination, and the risks of declining vaccination.
- The RCOG Information sheet and decision aid can be used to aid counselling.
- Potential reduction in transmission of COVID-19 to vulnerable household members.
- Potential reduction in the risk of stillbirth associated with COVID-19.
- Potential protection of the newborn from COVID-19 by passive antibody transfer.



The risks of vaccination:

- Minor local reaction (pain, redness or swelling at the injection site).
- Mild systemic adverse effects like fatigue, headache or myalgia, typically short-lived (less than a few days).
- Rare thrombotic adverse events following use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine (Although this will now be rare as the AstraZeneca vaccine is not routinely used in the UK for women who are pregnant or under the age of 40).
- There has been no evidence to suggest foetal harm following vaccination against COVID-19, and foetal harm is considered to be extremely unlikely based on evidence from other non-live vaccines.



The risks from COVID-19 if the pregnant woman declines vaccination:

The full risks from COVID-19 to mother and foetus are covered in detail in [section 1.5 of the RCOG Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection and pregnancy Version 13 guidance](#) and are summarised below.

Maternal risks:

- Most women with COVID-19 in pregnancy will have no symptoms. However, some women will develop critical illness from COVID-19.
- The risk of severe illness from COVID-19 is higher for pregnant women than for non-pregnant women, particularly in the third trimester.
- There is consistent evidence that pregnant women are more likely to be admitted to an intensive care unit than non-pregnant women with COVID-19.

Foetal risks

- Symptomatic maternal COVID-19 is associated with a two to three times greater risk of preterm birth.
- Although the overall risk of stillbirth is small, the risk is approximately doubled with SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Additional risk factors:

- Risk of exposure due to occupation: for example (and not limited to) healthcare and social workers, public-facing roles and education settings.
- Risk of severe illness: medical conditions (hypertension, diabetes), body mass index above 30 kg/m², Black or Asian ethnicity or from other minority ethnicity backgrounds



Resources to use to stay up to date and find out further information:

It would be a great idea to save these key links to your browser so that you can refer to them easily.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) [Coronavirus pregnancy and women's health – Covid-19 vaccinations](#) website provide lots of useful resources including:

- [Coronavirus Vaccination in Pregnancy Information for Healthcare Professionals \(June 2021\)](#)- Providing a great overview of the most up-to-date evidence, guidance and information around vaccination during pregnancy.
- [Information and Decision Aid \(Updated July 2021\)](#). – supporting women to make informed decisions in discussion with their health professionals.
- Training resources for health professionals.

[COVID-19 The Green Book, Chapter 14a](#) – includes information on the evidence for the recommended use of the COVID vaccine, side effects and clinical recommendations. It is advised that you refer to chapters specific to pregnancy for the most up-to-date clinical advice, evidence and information on safety.

