

Maternal Vaccinations

Information about free vaccines to protect against harmful diseases

[health.gov.au/immunisation](https://www.health.gov.au/immunisation)

Vaccinations in pregnancy

The National Immunisation Schedule outlines recommended vaccines that are available free under the National Immunisation Program.

You can receive **free** vaccines as long as you have a Medicare Card or are eligible for one.

Pregnant women should receive influenza and whooping cough vaccines during every pregnancy.

It is safe to have both the influenza and whooping cough vaccines at the same time. These can also be given with COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccination in pregnancy can protect your baby

Babies cannot be vaccinated against influenza until they are 6 months old. They also do not complete their vaccination course against whooping cough until 6 months of age.

So getting vaccinated against influenza and whooping cough during pregnancy allows protective antibodies to pass through the placenta to the baby. This protects them in their first few months of life when they are most vulnerable and too young to be vaccinated themselves.

Where to get vaccinated

You can get your vaccinations from the following vaccination providers:

- local general practices
- community health or local council clinics in some areas
- Aboriginal community health services.

While vaccines are free, your vaccination provider may charge a consultation or administration fee for the visit. Check when you make your appointment.

National Immunisation Schedule (Maternal)

Stage of pregnancy	Disease
Recommended between 20 and 32 weeks	● Pertussis (given with diphtheria and tetanus)
Anytime during pregnancy	● Influenza

Side effects

You may experience mild side effects following vaccination. Most side effects last no more than a couple of days and are part of the immune system's natural response to the vaccine.

Common reactions include:

- pain, swelling or redness at the injection site
- tiredness
- muscle aches
- mild fever.

These side effects are no more common in pregnant women than non-pregnant women.

Serious reactions to vaccines are rare. If you have a reaction you think is severe or unexpected, seek medical advice straight away.

Vaccines are safe

There is extensive evidence demonstrating the safety of the influenza and pertussis vaccines in pregnant women. Studies of women vaccinated in pregnancy have found no evidence that the vaccines harm their developing babies.

All vaccines in use in Australia provide benefits that far outweigh any risks. It is safer to be vaccinated than get the disease.

Maternal Vaccinations

Pertussis (whooping cough)

Whooping cough is a highly infectious bacterial infection that spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It affects the lungs and airways and may cause a person to cough violently and uncontrollably, making it difficult to breathe.

- Whooping cough can be serious for babies. It can cause serious complications including brain damage and pneumonia and sometimes death.
- Babies less than six months of age are at the greatest risk of infection and severe illness.
- Babies under six weeks of age are too young to get vaccinated against whooping cough themselves.

Vaccination against whooping cough during every pregnancy significantly reduces the risk of the disease in young babies.

Your baby will still need to be vaccinated against whooping cough according to the National Immunisation Program childhood schedule.

Vaccination during pregnancy will give the highest protection against whooping cough to your newborn baby. Partners, grandparents, carers and other adults who have contact with babies should also have the whooping cough vaccine to protect the baby from infection. This is not available free under the National Immunisation Program.

Whooping cough vaccines are only available in Australia as combination vaccines that provide protection against other diseases such as diphtheria and tetanus.

Vaccination records

Your vaccination provider will record your vaccinations on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

You can get your Immunisation History Statement from the AIR by:

- going to my.gov.au and signing in to access your Medicare online account or using the Express Plus Medicare mobile app
- calling Services Australia on **1800 653 809** to request a copy
- asking your vaccination provider to print a copy for you.

Influenza (flu)

Influenza is a highly contagious viral infection that spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Influenza can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications, including pneumonia and heart and other organ damage.

- Changes to your immune, heart and lung functions during pregnancy make you more vulnerable to severe illness from influenza.
- Even healthy women with an uncomplicated pregnancy can develop life-threatening influenza. Other complications can include premature labour or stillbirth.
- For young babies, influenza infection can cause pneumonia and can even lead to death.
- Babies under six months of age are more likely to be hospitalised with influenza than any other age group.

Getting vaccinated every year protects you against new strains of the virus and also reduces the risk of spreading influenza to your baby.

Babies of mothers who receive an influenza vaccine during pregnancy are much less likely to have confirmed influenza infection in the first six months of life and end up in hospital.

MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions you can:

- talk to your vaccination provider
- visit health.gov.au/immunisation
- contact your state or territory health department.