

# Maternal Vaccinations

Information about free vaccines in pregnancy to protect you and your baby

[health.gov.au/maternalvaccinations](https://health.gov.au/maternalvaccinations)

## The National Immunisation Program

The National Immunisation Program (NIP) provides free vaccines against certain diseases, to increase national immunisation rates and reduce vaccine preventable disease. Vaccinations range from birth through to adulthood, including in pregnancy.

## Vaccinations in pregnancy

You can receive free vaccines under the NIP if you have a Medicare Card or are eligible for one.

Pregnant women are recommended to receive influenza, whooping cough and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines during their pregnancy.

It is safe to receive the maternal vaccines at the same time. These can also be given with COVID-19 vaccines, if these are also recommended.

## How vaccination in pregnancy protects your baby

Getting vaccinated against influenza, whooping cough and RSV during pregnancy allows protective antibodies to pass through the mother's placenta to the baby. This protects the baby from birth and in their first few months of life when they are most vulnerable to serious illness and cannot yet be vaccinated themselves.

## Where to get vaccinated

You can get your vaccinations from the following vaccination providers:

- your obstetrician or midwife
- local general practices
- local council immunisation clinics (in some states and territories)
- community health centres
- Aboriginal health services
- participating pharmacies.

## National Immunisation Program schedule

The NIP schedule (maternal) outlines the recommended vaccines that are available for free during pregnancy.

| Stage of pregnancy                      | Disease  |
|---|--|
| Recommended at anytime during pregnancy | Influenza (flu)                                |
| Recommended at 20 to 32 weeks           | Pertussis (whooping cough) <sup>^</sup>        |
| Recommended at 28 to 36 weeks           | Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) <sup>*</sup> |

<sup>^</sup>Pertussis vaccine is combined with diphtheria and tetanus.

<sup>\*</sup>Abrysvo<sup>®</sup> is the only RSV vaccine approved for use in pregnant women.

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

## Side effects are mild

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. Seek medical advice straight away if you have a reaction that you think is severe or unexpected.

# Maternal Vaccinations

## Vaccines are safe

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

All vaccines supplied for use in Australia are approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) which does rigorous testing for safety, quality and efficacy. For a vaccine to be approved by the TGA, the benefits must outweigh the risks, meaning it is safer to be vaccinated than get the disease.

## 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 such as 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.

Getting vaccinated against whooping cough during every pregnancy will significantly reduce the risk of your baby catching whooping cough.

Your baby will still need to be vaccinated against whooping cough according to the NIP schedule (childhood).

## Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

RSV is a common, highly contagious virus that affects the airways and lungs and can cause serious illness such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia. It is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets can be inhaled by others or land on surfaces where the virus can live for several hours.

- Almost all children will be infected with RSV in their first two years of life.
- RSV is a leading cause of hospitalisation for babies under six months.
- Even otherwise healthy children can develop severe RSV disease and need hospitalisation.
- Maternal vaccination reduces the risk of severe RSV disease.

Getting vaccinated against RSV during pregnancy protects your newborn baby against severe RSV disease from birth and in their first few months of life.

## 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 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 reduces the risk of spreading influenza to your baby.

If you receive an influenza vaccine during pregnancy, your baby is much less likely to catch influenza and end up in hospital in their first six months of life.

## Vaccination records

Your vaccination provider will record your vaccinations on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) to ensure there is an accurate record of all administered vaccines.

You can view your Immunisation History Statement on the AIR by:

- going to [my.gov.au](https://my.gov.au) and signing in to access your Medicare online account or using the myGov mobile app
- calling Services Australia on **1800 653 809** to request a copy
- asking your vaccination provider to print a copy for you.

## More information

- talk to your vaccination provider
- visit [health.gov.au/maternalvaccinations](https://health.gov.au/maternalvaccinations)
- contact your state or territory health department.



Australian Government  
Department of Health,  
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National  
Immunisation  
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A joint Australian, State and Territory Government Initiative