



Australian Government



# Pregnancy, breastfeeding, and COVID-19 vaccines

Pregnant women are advised to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Pfizer is the preferred COVID-19 vaccine for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy. Research shows Pfizer is safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women and they can receive the vaccine at any stage of pregnancy.

The risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19 is higher for pregnant women and their unborn baby. Pregnant women who get COVID-19 have a higher risk of needing to go to hospital or needing intensive care. Their unborn baby has a slightly higher chance of being born prematurely (born before 37 weeks of pregnancy) and needing to go to a hospital for care.

Vaccination is the best way to reduce these risks. For the best protection, pregnant women are recommended to receive 2 doses of the Pfizer vaccine, 3 to 6 weeks apart.

There is evidence available from other countries about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy. Reports show that the Pfizer vaccine is safe for use by pregnant women.

Research shows that pregnant women and non-pregnant women get similar protection from COVID-19 vaccination.

The chances of complications such as premature delivery, stillbirth, small for gestational age infants and congenital anomalies does not increase after vaccination. A US study of more than 35,000 pregnant women showed the side effects after vaccination were very similar in both pregnant and non-pregnant women.

As data on pregnant women increases, we will continue to update our advice.

## What are the possible side effects after receiving the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy?

Common side effects following the Pfizer vaccine include:

- fever
- sore arm
- headache
- muscle pain
- joint pain

- chills

If you have any of these side effects after your vaccination, you can take paracetamol to reduce these common side effects. Paracetamol is safe in all stages of pregnancy.

Studies from around the world have not found any side effects specific to pregnant women or their babies. However, it is possible that there are very rare side effects that have not been found yet.

### **Are there any benefits for my baby from having COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy?**

Pregnant women with COVID-19 have a higher risk of stillbirth or premature (early) delivery. Their babies are also more likely to show distress during delivery, or to need treatment in a newborn intensive care area in the hospital.

Vaccination is the best way to reduce these risks.

Scientific evidence suggests that the antibodies created by pregnant women after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine can cross the placenta, particularly in women vaccinated early in pregnancy and who have received both doses prior to the baby being born. These antibodies may provide the baby with some protection against COVID-19 for the first few months of life.

### **What are the recommendations for breastfeeding women?**

Pfizer is recommended for women who are breastfeeding. You can continue breastfeeding before or after your vaccination.

### **What are the recommendations for women planning pregnancy?**

Pfizer is also recommended for women who are planning pregnancy. Getting vaccinated before conceiving means you are likely to have protection against COVID-19 throughout your pregnancy. Please note that:

- You do not need to avoid becoming pregnant before or after a COVID-19 vaccination.
- Vaccination does not affect fertility.
- You are not required to have a pregnancy test before getting vaccinated.

### **For more information**

To find out where you can get your COVID-19 vaccine, visit <https://covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/eligibility>

If you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines, speak to your doctor, go to [health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines-languages](https://health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines-languages), or call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080. For interpreting services, call 131 450.