

# TALKING COVID-19 VACCINES INFORMATION FOR WOMEN



Choosing to be vaccinated is absolutely YOUR decision. This trusted document from the Australian College of Midwives with information from the Australian Department of Health can help you make your decision.

## 1 Why should I get the vaccine?

The virus is spreading uncontained and widely in our communities. Pregnant women are a vulnerable population and numbers of pregnant women being admitted to hospital with severe COVID-19 symptoms are increasing. The vaccine is known to be the best way to reduce the risk of you getting COVID-19 and becoming seriously unwell. Becoming unwell with COVID in your 3rd trimester doubles your chance of stillbirth and triples your chance of your baby being born prematurely. It also increases the chance of you needing an emergency caesarean section.

## 2 Why has the vaccine recommendations changed?

Pregnant women weren't originally included in the first clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccine, so there wasn't a large amount of information to confirm the safety of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy. Since then, evidence from overseas now shows us that COVID-19 vaccines, like Pfizer (Comirnaty) and Moderna (Spikevax), are safe for pregnant women.

## 3 Will the vaccine harm my baby?

No. The vaccine doesn't contain any live virus, so it can't be passed to your baby through the placenta. The antibodies you develop after having the vaccine CAN be passed through the placenta, so it's likely that your baby will have greater protection against the virus when they are born.

## 4 How many women have had the vaccine?

Over 200,000 women from across the globe have now been vaccinated. No adverse effects in woman, their pregnancy or baby have been reported.

## 5 Is the vaccine safe?

The data from the vaccinated pregnant women who have received Pfizer (Comirnaty) or Moderna (Spikevax) vaccines show that it is a safe vaccine. The risk of complications or significant problems for you or your baby if you were infected with COVID-19 is higher than the risk of complications from the vaccine.

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## **My partner doesn't want to catch COVID from me if I have the vaccine**

Because the vaccine is not a live vaccine, nobody can catch COVID-19 from you when you get vaccinated. The vaccine works by kickstarting your immune system to make antibodies. These antibodies will lie in wait to attack COVID-19 if you're exposed to the virus and do not produce, or cause, any other effect within your body.

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## **I don't like the idea of being vaccinated in pregnancy**

Pregnant and breastfeeding women are already being offered, routinely and safely, other vaccines in pregnancy to protect against influenza and whooping cough. Many of these vaccines also protect their babies from infection. Vaccines, like Pfizer (Comirnaty) or Moderna (Spikevax), are non-live vaccines and are considered safe in pregnancy.

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## **Can I wait until after the baby's born?**

Yes, of course, it is your choice to get the vaccine or to wait, but because of the higher risks of complications if you get COVID-19 in the late stages of pregnancy, it really is safer for both you and your baby to have the vaccine as soon as you can.

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## **When should I get the vaccine?**

You should get the vaccine as soon as you are offered one and aim to complete 2 doses of Pfizer (Comirnaty), 3 weeks apart or 2 doses of Moderna (Spikevax), 4 weeks apart. You can be vaccinated at any stage of pregnancy. Most of the complications with COVID-19 seem to happen in the last 3 months of pregnancy (third trimester) so it is best to try and get both doses of the vaccine before your last trimester.

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## **I'm in late pregnancy and can only fit in one dose before my baby is born, should I bother?**

Yes, absolutely. Even having only one dose will provide some protection against COVID-19. Having the second dose is vital to gaining the best protection against COVID-19 for you and your baby and you should still have your second dose after your baby has been born.

\*Adapted with permission from the Royal College of Midwives, UK

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