

Vaccines and Pregnancy



Why are vaccines important?

Vaccines are a type of medicine that helps protect your body from some infections. They also help prevent the spread of infections to others who have not gotten the vaccine. Some infections can harm you or your baby if you get them when you are pregnant. When you get a vaccine in pregnancy, you become protected against getting the infection, and you pass this protection to your baby.

Should I receive vaccines while I am pregnant?

Some vaccines, like the flu and tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccine, are safe for you to get while you are pregnant. These vaccines are recommended for all pregnant women. Other vaccines are important, because they protect against infections that can hurt your baby, like rubella (German measles) and chickenpox. But they are not safe to receive while you are pregnant. It is better to get these vaccines at least a month before you get pregnant or after your baby is born. Other vaccines, like hepatitis A or B, can be safe to get while you are pregnant, but you should only get them if you are at risk for that infection.

Will the vaccines hurt my baby?

Most vaccines will not hurt your baby if you get them during pregnancy. A small number of vaccines contain parts of live virus, which could hurt your baby. You should not get these vaccines while you are pregnant. See the next page for a list of these vaccines.

What if I am traveling to a foreign country while I am pregnant?

You may need extra vaccines for protection if you are traveling to a foreign country. You can find more information about which vaccines you may need depending on where you travel at www.cdc.gov/travel.

Table 1. Which vaccines should I receive while I am pregnant?

YES!	How Does This Vaccine Work?
Influenza (flu) inactivated injection vaccine	All pregnant women should get the yearly flu shot vaccine. Pregnant women who get the flu are more likely to be severely ill and may have a higher chance of problems like preterm labor. If you get the flu vaccine during pregnancy, your baby is protected from the flu for the first 6 months of life. The flu vaccine can be given at any time during pregnancy, but it must be the shot and not the nasal spray form of the vaccine.
Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (Tdap)	All pregnant women should get the vaccine to protect against pertussis (whooping cough) each time they are pregnant. This vaccine is given in a shot that also contains protection against tetanus and diphtheria. It is called the Tdap shot. Pertussis is a very serious infection of the lungs. Pertussis is more common now in adults, and it is a very harmful and deadly infection in newborns and young babies. Getting the pertussis vaccine in pregnancy can protect your baby from birth until 2 months of age when the first set of infant vaccines for pertussis are recommended. You should be vaccinated during each pregnancy between 27 and 36 weeks to give your baby the best protection. It does not matter if you received the tetanus vaccine before you were pregnant.
MAYBE	How Does This Vaccine Work?
Hepatitis A	Hepatitis A vaccine is safe in pregnancy. You may need the vaccine if you are at risk for the infection. Risks include a family member infected with hepatitis A, travel to an area where hepatitis A is common, or exposure to dirty living conditions or unsafe water. The vaccine is given in 2 doses, 6 months apart.



Table 1. Which vaccines should I receive while I am pregnant?	
Hepatitis B	Hepatitis B vaccine is safe in pregnancy. You may need the vaccine if you are at risk for the infection and are not already immune (protected from this infection). Risks include having more than one sexual partner in the last 6 months, recent treatment for a sexually transmitted infection, on dialysis, recent or current drug use, or if you have a sexual partner who has hepatitis B. The vaccine is given in 3 doses over a 6-month period.
Meningococcal	Meningococcal (MCV3, MCV4) vaccine is safe in pregnancy. It is important for persons who have certain health problems, such as an autoimmune disease. This vaccine is also recommended for persons who are living in a dormitory and aged 19 to 21 years or who were vaccinated before age 16 years.
Pneumococcal	Pneumococcal (PCV13, PPSV23) vaccine is safe in pregnancy. It is important for persons with certain health problems, like diabetes. Talk to your health care provider about whether you need this vaccine.
NO	How Does This Vaccine Work?
Human Papillomavirus (HPV)	HPV vaccine is not recommended in pregnancy, but you should not be worried that it will harm you or your baby if you accidentally get it while you are pregnant. HPV vaccine is recommended for women aged 26 years and younger before or after pregnancy. The vaccine is given in 3 doses over a 6-month period.
Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)	MMR vaccine is not recommended in pregnancy. If you become infected with rubella (German measles) during pregnancy, your baby can have serious birth defects. If you are not already immune to rubella, it is best to get this vaccine at least a month before you become pregnant. That will protect your baby from the disease. Most women are immune to rubella because they got the rubella vaccine when they were children. You will be tested during pregnancy to see if you are immune to rubella as part of the blood tests at your first prenatal visit. If you are not immune, you should not receive the vaccine until after your baby is born.
Varicella (chickenpox)	Varicella vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women. If you have not had the vaccine or chickenpox and are not immune to chickenpox, it is best for you and your baby to get the vaccine before you become pregnant. You can be tested during pregnancy to see if you are immune. Most women are immune to chickenpox even if they do not remember getting the disease or the infection. If you are not immune to the chickenpox, you should get the vaccine after the baby is born. The vaccine is given in 2 doses, 4 to 8 weeks apart.
Influenza (flu) live nasal vaccine	Pregnant women should not get the nasal flu vaccine because it contains parts of the live virus that could possibly cause the flu. You should get the flu shot vaccine.

For More Information

CDC: Vaccines during pregnancy

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/pregnant.html>

March of Dimes: Vaccines during pregnancy

<http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/vaccinations-during-pregnancy.aspx>

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 7.7

Approved September 2014.

This page may be reproduced for noncommercial use by health care professionals to share with clients. Any other reproduction is subject to the Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health's approval. The information and recommendations appearing on this page are appropriate in most instances, but they are not a substitute for medical diagnosis. For specific information concerning your personal medical condition, the Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health suggests that you consult your health care provider.