

1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
2. Coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon>)
3. Vaccinations for coronavirus (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon/vaccinations>)

Press release

JCVI issues new advice on COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant women

The JCVI has advised that pregnant women should be offered the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as the rest of the population, based on their age and clinical risk group.

From:

Public Health England (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>)

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There have been no specific safety concerns identified with any brand of coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines in relation to pregnancy.

Real-world data from the United States (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafepregnancyregistry.html>) shows that around 90,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated, mainly with mRNA vaccines including Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, without any safety concerns being raised.

Based on this data, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that it's preferable for pregnant women in the UK to be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines where available. There is no evidence to suggest that other vaccines are unsafe for pregnant women, but more research is needed.

The advice, published in Public Health England's Green Book (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book-chapter-14a>), a clinical professional guide for vaccinators in the UK, still advises that pregnant women should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with their clinician, including the latest evidence on safety and which vaccines they should receive.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, COVID-19 Chair for JCVI, said:

We encourage pregnant women to discuss the risks and benefits with their clinician – those at increased risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 are encouraged to promptly take up the offer of vaccination when offered.

There have been no specific safety concerns from any brand of COVID-19 vaccines in relation to pregnancy.

There is more real-world safety data from the US in relation to the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines in women who are pregnant – therefore, we advise a preference for these to be offered to pregnant women.

All vaccines being used in the UK have undergone robust clinical trials and have met the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)'s strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at Public Health England (PHE), said:

The available data on the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines provides confidence that they can be offered safely to pregnant women.

The COVID-19 vaccines continue to save thousands of lives and it is important that we encourage as many people as possible to take up the offer when it is their turn.

Dr Edward Morris, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), said:

We are grateful to the JCVI for taking into consideration our evidence and updating the guidance around the COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy.

Vaccination offers pregnant women the best protection from COVID-19, which can be serious in some women.

We believe it should be a woman's choice whether to have the vaccine or not after considering the benefits and risks and would encourage pregnant women to discuss with a trusted source like their GP, obstetrician or midwife, or a healthcare professional in a vaccination centre.

This move will empower all the pregnant women in the UK to make the decision that is right for them, at the same time that the non-pregnant population in their age group receive protection from COVID-19.

Data shows that vaccines are effective in protecting people from serious illness from COVID-19. Though uncommon, severe illness due to COVID-19 is more likely in later pregnancy. Pregnant women who do get symptomatic COVID-19 infection are 2 to 3 times more likely to give birth to their baby prematurely.

The greatest risk factor for severe outcomes from COVID-19 is age, which is why pregnant women should be invited for vaccination along with their age or clinical risk group.

Women who are planning pregnancy, are in the immediate postpartum, or are breastfeeding can be vaccinated with any vaccine, depending on their age and clinical risk group.

The JCVI will continue to closely monitor the evidence on COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy and will update its advice as required.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme has been a huge success, with recent **PHE** analysis showing the vaccines have prevented 10,400 deaths in those aged 60 and older in England up to the end of March.

The **JCVI** advised last week that, as a precaution, it is preferable for people under the age of 30 with no underlying health conditions to be offered an alternative to the AstraZeneca vaccine where possible.

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