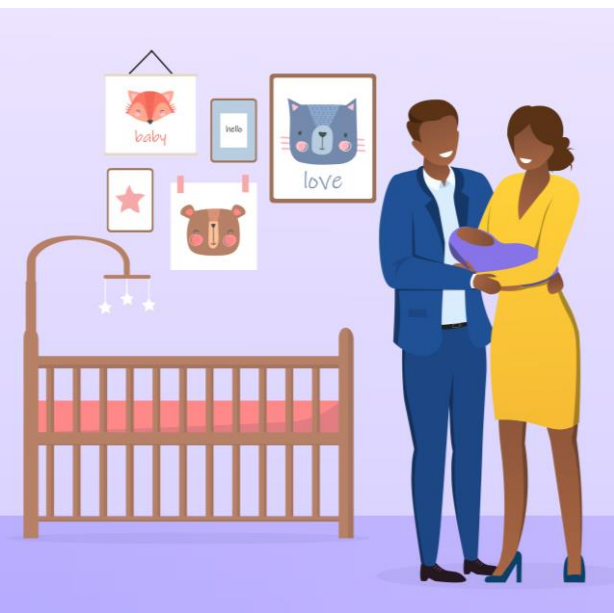




This is one of a series of insight cards to support vaccine confidence in various groups and communities

Increasing vaccine confidence: Pregnancy and Fertility for both men and women



Public Health England

Pregnant?

Have your COVID-19 vaccines!

It is important to have both doses of your COVID-19 vaccine to protect you and your unborn baby.

COVID-19 infection is currently circulating and can be serious for pregnant women.

Thousands of pregnant women have been safely vaccinated in the UK and worldwide.

Call 119 or go online to www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/ to register for your vaccination appointment. You can also attend walk in, mobile or pop up vaccination clinics in your area.

COVID-19 immunisation
Helping to protect you and your pregnancy



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Context

Almost 20% of the most critically ill COVID patients are pregnant women who have not been vaccinated.

Out of all women between the ages of 16 and 49 on ECMO in intensive care, pregnant women make up almost a third.

(Source: NHS England » NHS encourages pregnant women to get COVID-19 vaccine)

- It is important to have conversations with males as well as females, as men have also reported their concerns and appreciated reassurance
- On 16 April 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that pregnant women should be offered the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine at the same time as the rest of the population, based on their age and clinical risk group
- It is preferable for pregnant women in the UK to be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines where available, because they've been more widely used during pregnancy in other countries and have not caused any safety issues.

(Source: Health chiefs encourage more pregnant women to get their COVID-19 vaccine - GOV.UK – July 21)



Key messages

- COVID-19 vaccines are recommended in pregnancy.
- Vaccination is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both women and babies, including reducing risk of women to intensive care and premature birth of the baby
- Women may wish to discuss the benefits and risks of having the vaccine with their healthcare professional and reach a joint decision based on individual circumstances. However, as for the non-pregnant population, pregnant women can receive a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have not had a discussion with a healthcare professional.
- Women do not need to not stop breastfeeding to have the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Women trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination and there is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 vaccines will affect fertility in women or men.
- Having a COVID-19 vaccine will not remove the requirement for employers to carry out a risk assessment for pregnant employees, which should follow the rules set out in this [government guidance](#).

(Source: COVID-19 vaccines, pregnancy and breastfeeding (rcog.org.uk))

'The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines available in the UK have been shown to be effective and to have a good safety profile. These vaccines do not contain live coronavirus and cannot infect a pregnant woman or her unborn baby in the womb.' [UKHSA guidance](#)

Pregnancy and Fertility for both men and women – quotes from professionals



“The vaccines continue to save thousands of lives and we are **confident that they can be safely offered to pregnant women**, but if you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to discuss these with a healthcare professional.”

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at PHE

“As a GP, I see pregnant women all the time. I just want you to be safe - **have both doses of the vaccine** to keep you **protected and well** for yourself and for your baby.”

Dr Oge Ilozue, GP and Senior Clinical Advisor to London Covid-19 vaccination



“Yesterday I was working with a **pregnant lady with COVID infection who was on a ventilator** and you could see the fear in her eyes. I had to tell her that we needed to plan for an **early delivery for the baby** and that the baby may have complications.”

Dr Kate Wiles, Obstetric physician at Royal London Hospital

“I encourage you to **continue breastfeeding** as you **cannot pass COVID-19** or the vaccine on to your baby **through your breast milk**.”

Memuna Sowe, Clinical Matron/Midwife Croydon Health services



“Pregnant women are at **greater risk of serious illness** if they get **COVID-19**, and those with **severe COVID-19** are **twice as likely** to experience a **stillbirth** and **three times as likely** to have a **preterm baby**. **Getting the vaccine** is the **best way to keep you and your baby safe**.”

Gill Walton, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Midwives



“There is **no evidence** the vaccine harms a **man's reproductive system**. However, **being infected with COVID-19 may affect fertility**. Having the vaccine is the **best way** to protect yourself against COVID-19 infection and long-term health complications.”

Dr Tehseen Khan, GP and Senior Clinical Advisor to London Covid-19 vaccination programme

Pregnancy and Fertility for both men and women – Top Q&As

Is the vaccine safe for me and my baby? How do you know?

- COVID-19 vaccines offer pregnant women the best protection against COVID-19 disease which can be very serious in later pregnancy for some women.
- COVID-19 vaccines do NOT contain live coronavirus or any ingredients that are harmful to pregnant women or their babies and cannot cause infection.
- Other non-live vaccines, such as whooping cough and flu, are considered to be safe for pregnant women and their unborn babies.
- mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) are also quickly broken down once injected- within a few days there will be no vaccine left
- World-wide many women have been safely vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy

Will having the vaccine affect my ability to have children in the future? How can you be sure?

- Scientists have found absolutely no evidence or reason that any of the vaccines can affect the fertility of men or women; including the British Fertility Society.
- Who also say that those who are donating their eggs or sperm for the use of others can still have a COVID-19 vaccine, as can people undergoing fertility treatment.
- They also recommend, along with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, that people of reproductive age should get a COVID-19 vaccine when they receive their invitation, including people who are trying to have a baby or thinking about having a baby in the future.

If I have the vaccine, can I breastfeed?

- Latest advice, including from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, is that you cannot pass any vaccine or its ingredients to your baby through breast milk; and so it is fine to continue to breastfeed and have your vaccination.

It is your decision

so make sure you get your information from a reliable source such as [NHS](#), or the [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists](#).

If you are at all unsure

speak to a healthcare professional about any concerns you may have about the vaccine and your health before you have the vaccination.

Risks from COVID-19 infection

- A systematic review showed that **pregnant women with COVID-19** versus without COVID-19 are more likely to **deliver preterm** and could have an **increased risk of maternal death** and of being admitted to the **intensive care unit**. Their babies are more likely to be admitted to the **neonatal unit**.

(Source: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3320> – Sep 20)

- **The COVID-19 virus can cause underlying damage** to the testis and also other components of the **male genital tract directly or indirectly affecting reproduction**

(Source: [Journal of Medical Virology](#) – Nov 20)

- A systematic review of the literature **provides evidence** that **male gonads may be potentially vulnerable to COVID infections**

(Source: [The World Journal of Men's Health](#) – Oct 20)

What we know about the vaccine and fertility/pregnancy

- [Real-world data from the United States](#) – where over 160,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated– have not raised any safety concerns. [The UK Health Security Agency](#) reported more than 82,000 pregnant women in England received at least one dose of vaccine and [Public Health Scotland](#) reported more than 19,000 pregnant women have received a vaccine, with no serious adverse effects recorded.

(Source: [COVID-19 vaccines, pregnancy and breastfeeding: RCOG](#))

- A study comparing pregnancy outcomes for women who had received the COVID-19 vaccine with those who had not found no significant differences between the two groups: there was no increase in stillbirths or premature births, no developmental abnormalities and no evidence of babies being smaller or bigger-

(Source- [American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology- 12 August 2021](#))

- There is absolutely **no evidence**, and **no theoretical reason**, that any of the vaccines can affect the **fertility of women or men**.

(Source: [Covid19 Vaccines FAQs.- britishfertilitysociety](#) – Feb 21)

- When we talked about the **fertility concerns**, we just assumed the hesitancy was from the woman. It wasn't. When we talked to them, they said, 'Look, **our fathers are frightened that no one will marry us if we take the vaccine**'.

(Source: [Delivering the COVID-19 vaccine across London Evaluation report](#) - July 2021)

- Data on accidental pregnancies that occurred during vaccine trials and outcomes from women who received the vaccines suggests that COVID-19 vaccines **do not prevent pregnancies** in humans and there is **no detrimental effect** of vaccination on **early pregnancy**

(Source: [Nature Reviews Immunology](#) – Feb 21)

- **Vaccination in pregnancy protects the newborn infant** against infection by the transfer of **maternal antibodies** across the placenta

(Source: [Full article: Coronavirus disease and vaccination during pregnancy and childbirth: a review of the Israeli perspective and experience \(tandfonline.com\)](#) - July 21)



Barriers

Enablers

Concerns regarding effect on fertility in men and women



Discuss the **latest research** which suggests that there is **no evidence**, and no reason, that any of the vaccines can affect the **fertility of women or men**; and signpost them to [COVID-19 Vaccines FAQs from the British Fertility Society](#)

Concerns around the effect on an unborn child



Reassure the mother and others concerned that these vaccines **do not contain live coronavirus** and nd it is a **non-live vaccine** and signpost them to [COVID-19 vaccines, pregnancy and breastfeeding from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists \(RCOG\)](#)

Concerns around side effects



Advise pregnant women to discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with their clinician, including the latest evidence on safety and which vaccines they should receive. Discuss / signpost to [a guide for all women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding - GOV.UK](#) and [RCOG FAQs](#) which includes JCVI stating that a pregnant woman is not necessarily at higher risk of blood clots following the vaccine just because they have a higher risk of other blood clots

Concerns around safety and breastfeeding



Share [RCOG advice](#); which says that there is **no plausible mechanism** by which any vaccine ingredient could pass to a baby through breast milk. Women should therefore not stop breastfeeding in order to be vaccinated against COVID-19

Pregnancy and Fertility for both men and women – Confident conversations tips from Chief Midwife



“We know that for people to make informed choices about the COVID-19 vaccine, they want to hear from trusted health and care professionals. You play a vital role in speaking to local people, communities and colleagues, listening to their perspectives and sharing unbiased information about the vaccine. We would like to share some tips that we have learned along the way. We hope they help you feel confident to have these essential, and sometimes difficult, conversations.”

Kate Brintworth, Chief Midwife for the NHS in London

Listen, without prejudice

Adopt the mindset of counsellor rather than salesperson. Seek to understand and support, rather than aiming for a “win”. Listen to their specific concerns and aim to present a balance.

Be person-centred

Let the conversation be led by the concerns and interests of the pregnant woman.

Respect language and cultural diversity

People may be engaging in their second or third language. Explain scientific or medical terms. Avoid abbreviations (CCG, JCVI etc) or explain them if they are helpful. Be clear, but not condescending, and give people the opportunity to seek clarity. Find out ahead of the session whether interpreters would be helpful for the audience.

Acknowledge past experiences

Acknowledge that people have not been treated fairly in the past. For example, experiences of racism; other forms of prejudice; not being taken seriously; not feeling heard.

Be transparent and honest

Point to trusted or verified sources of accessible information and let people know what to expect in terms of side effects. If you do not know the answer to a question, be honest, and find out the answer (if you can). Alternatively, signpost to credible sources of information.

Reassure women that the vaccine is safe

Emphasise that the baby cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine, that the vaccine doesn't harm the baby and that we have been protecting women and babies with other vaccines safely for a long time, for example with the flu and whopping cough vaccines.

Share information about the vaccine development

Explain the development process, trials and total number of people vaccinated in the UK so far, and that the vaccine has been given to a range of people across ethnicities, age, and long-term conditions.

Give evidence-based information

Give evidence of the real-world data from the United States where over 120,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated, mainly with mRNA vaccines including Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, which have shown to be safe for both mother and baby. Explain that this is why there's a preference for pregnant women to be offered Pfizer or Moderna.

Clearly explain the risks of contracting COVID-19 during pregnancy

The evidence shows that women in their third trimester (after 28 weeks) are more likely to be seriously unwell and have a higher risk of their baby being born prematurely if they develop COVID-19. Vaccination can help to reduce a pregnant woman's chance of becoming seriously ill with COVID-19.

Get familiar with answers to common questions

Get to know frequently asked questions and answers, and other sources of information to signpost to, for example NHS.uk or rcog.org.uk/patients.

Recap the main points you gave to answer any questions

Summarise and address concerns at the end of the session to promote further understanding. Provide opportunities to check understanding or ask further questions.

Pregnancy and Fertility for both men and women – Information and Resources

Vaccine – pregnancy and fertility information and resources

- [COVID-19 vaccines, pregnancy and breastfeeding \(rcog.org.uk\)](https://www.rcog.org.uk)
- [Combined info sheet and decision aid 11.10.2021 Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists \(rcog.org.uk\)](https://www.rcog.org.uk)
- [A guide to COVID-19 vaccination – Information on pregnancy and breastfeeding – UKHSA, available in community languages](https://www.ukhsa.gov.uk)
- [COVID-19 vaccination: a guide on pregnancy and breastfeeding- UKHSA](https://www.ukhsa.gov.uk)
- [Pregnant? Have your COVID-19 vaccines poster - UKHSA](https://www.ukhsa.gov.uk)
- [Pregnant? Have your COVID-19 vaccines social media cards – PHE & NHS Health Publications](https://www.ukhsa.gov.uk)
- [Pregnancy and coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS](https://www.nhs.uk)
- [British Society for Immunology Pregnancy Q&A video](https://www.britishsocietyforimmunology.org.uk)

The image shows two NHS leaflets. The top one is titled 'A guide to COVID-19 vaccination Information on pregnancy and breastfeeding' and includes text about vaccine safety and evidence. The bottom one is titled 'Pregnant? Have your COVID-19 vaccines!' and features a photograph of a pregnant woman, along with bullet points stating that COVID-19 infection is circulating, thousands of pregnant women have been vaccinated, and it's important to have both doses. Both leaflets include QR codes and contact information for more details.

General COVID vaccine information

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine – NHS](https://www.nhs.uk)
- [NHS Vaccine Facts](https://www.nhs.uk)
- [Connect on Coronavirus: public engagement resources - British Society for Immunology](https://www.britishsocietyforimmunology.org.uk)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation Toolkit – DCMS](https://www.dcms.gov.uk)

Webinars

- [Two recorded Q+A sessions with an expert panel of midwives, doctors and fertility specialists – PHE, GLA, NHS & Maternity Action](https://www.phe.gov.uk)

Videos

- [COVID-19: Vaccination programme FAQ explainer videos – YouTube – PHE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

The screenshot shows the website for the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists. The navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Guidelines & research services', 'Coronavirus (COVID-19), pregnancy and women's health', and 'Vaccination'. The 'Vaccination' section is expanded to show 'COVID-19 vaccines, pregnancy and fertility'. A search bar is visible at the top right. The main content area displays 'COVID-19 vaccines, pregnancy and breastfeeding' with a sub-heading and a brief description of the Q&A page.

A grid of five video thumbnails from Public Health England. Each thumbnail shows a person speaking and includes a duration timer. The videos are: 1. 'COVID-19 vaccine guide for women of childbearing age ...' (0:53); 2. 'Should I have the vaccine if I have already had COVID-19?' (1:27); 3. 'COVID-19 vaccines: can they affect my fertility?' (0:37); 4. 'How did we develop a COVID-19 vaccine so quickly? – Dr...' (1:49); 5. 'Should I have the vaccine if I have already had COVID-19?' (1:27).