

Preventing Respiratory Disease during Pregnancy



While respiratory diseases like COVID-19, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and flu may be mild for some people, there are certain conditions, like pregnancy, that put people at higher risk for severe illness. Even if you are generally healthy, changes to how your immune system, heart, and lungs work during pregnancy may make you more likely to get severely ill.

COVID-19, flu, and RSV can also pose serious risks to young babies who may not have antibodies or an immune system that is strong enough to fight these diseases. Getting vaccinated against these respiratory illnesses while pregnant can pass protective antibodies to your baby, which helps protect them from getting very sick in their first few months of life before they can get vaccinated.

Masking, washing your hands frequently, staying away from people who are sick, and staying up to date on COVID-19 and flu vaccines can help protect you from getting sick, and help your body fight off infections if you are exposed to COVID-19 and flu. Getting an RSV vaccine during RSV season (September-January) can help protect your baby from severe illness in their first few months of life.

Why does pregnancy put me at higher risk for respiratory illnesses?

Your body changes a lot during pregnancy. Pregnant people experience changes to their immune systems, heart, and lung functions. Respiratory illnesses are often associated with fevers, which can impact your baby's development. As a result of these changes in your body during pregnancy, you may be more susceptible to getting sick or having more severe symptoms while pregnant than you would if you were not pregnant.

How do we know COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines are safe during pregnancy?

We know that these vaccines are safe during pregnancy because they have been studied for many years. There have been a lot of studies that prove these vaccines are safe and that the benefits far outweigh any risks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine support and recommend vaccination against these diseases during pregnancy. **It is safe and recommended to receive COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines during pregnancy.**

What is the best time to get a COVID-19, flu, or RSV vaccine during pregnancy?

You should get a COVID-19 and flu vaccine as soon as you are eligible, during any trimester of pregnancy. RSV vaccines are recommended between 32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy during RSV season. If a pregnant parent gets an RSV vaccine at least 14 days before birth, their baby will not need to receive an RSV vaccine (except in rare cases). Ask your health care provider when is best for you at your next appointment.

How do COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines affect my baby?

Getting COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines during pregnancy help protect your baby from severe illness, hospitalizations, and death from these diseases. Getting vaccinated during pregnancy helps transfer protective antibodies through the placenta/umbilical cord during pregnancy, and through breastmilk after the baby is born. Babies are not eligible for COVID-19 or flu vaccinations until they are 6 months old, so getting a COVID-19 or flu vaccine when eligible during pregnancy is important to help protect both you and your baby from severe illness complications.

I'm pregnant. Which respiratory illness vaccines am I eligible for?

COVID-19 – you are eligible for any brand of a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine if you have not previously received a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine dose.

Flu – you are eligible for a flu vaccine if you have not yet received one for the 2024-2025 flu season. Pregnant people can receive any licensed, recommended inactivated flu vaccine. The nasal spray vaccine is not recommended for pregnant people.

RSV – you are eligible if you are between 32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy, and it is RSV season (September-January)*.

*If you have received an RSV vaccine in previous pregnancy, you are currently not eligible to receive a RSV vaccine, but your baby will receive protection through a dose of Nirsevimab.

Sources:

[COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>

[Flu Vaccine Safety and Pregnancy | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/qa_vacpregnant.htm)

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/qa_vacpregnant.htm

[RSV Vaccination for Pregnant People | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/rsv/public/pregnancy.html)

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/rsv/public/pregnancy.html>

DOH 820-256 September 2024

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov.