

Talk to Your Patients about COVID-19 Vaccination and Pregnancy

Update to York Region OBGYNs and Midwives as of September 24, 2021

As OBGYNs and Midwives, you are trusted experts in pregnancy and childbirth for your patients. Pregnancy can be a time with many questions and anxieties and your patients will look to you as someone they trust.

Many women and their partners are hesitant to receive vaccines while pregnant or breastfeeding and may have anxiety about vaccination during this stage in their life. Please discuss with your patients to help them decide about immunization against COVID-19 during pregnancy. Consider their personal risk of exposure to COVID-19, the risks of severe COVID-19 during pregnancy and the possible side effects and benefits of COVID-19 vaccination.

There is no evidence indicating COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe or less safe in pregnancy. The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain live virus and cannot cause a COVID-19 infection.

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) recommends that all individuals who are pregnant or those trying to become pregnant should receive the COVID-19 vaccination. The SOGC also recommends vaccination at any point during pregnancy and/or during breastfeeding.

The Association of Ontario Midwives recommends that all pregnant individuals are eligible and recommended to be vaccinated as soon as possible, at any stage in pregnancy, as COVID-19 infection during pregnancy can be severe, and the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks. Vaccination may be considered at any gestational age, including the first trimester.

We strongly recommend any partner and family members of the pregnant individual get vaccinated as well, to reduce the chances of exposure.

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy continues to be monitored in Ontario. [As of June 30, 2021](#), almost 40,000 pregnant people in Ontario received at least one dose of COVID-19 between December 2020 and June 2021. Preliminary data indicates there is no increased risk during pregnancy from COVID-19 vaccination.

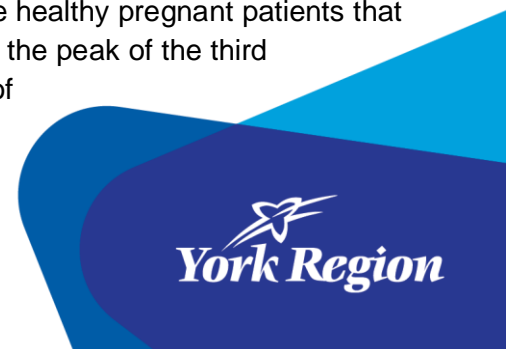
In addition, over 90,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the United States. No major side effects have been identified at this point, and no differences in miscarriage, preterm births, stillbirths or birth defects have been found.

In most pregnant women, COVID-19 causes mild symptoms such as fever, cough and muscle aches that will get better by themselves, similar to symptoms in non-pregnant women. The majority of babies born to patients with COVID-19 are healthy and full term.

However, compared to non-pregnant women, pregnant women who have COVID-19 have a higher risk of requiring breathing support, and being admitted to intensive care

[The Ontario Science Table reports](#) approximately **7% to 15%** of pregnant individuals infected with COVID-19 will experience moderate to severe disease and require hospitalization.

In Spring 2021, during the third wave of COVID-19 in Ontario, many otherwise healthy pregnant patients that contracted COVID-19 became very sick, very quickly. On April 20, 2021, near the peak of the third wave, 30% of all intensive care unit (ICU) patients at Sinai Health in the City of Toronto were pregnant or postpartum. The risk of complications or severity from COVID-19 far outweigh any potential risk from COVID-19 vaccination.



York Region Public Health Can Help

Attached to this message is a fact sheet you can share with your patients who are interested in pregnancy, currently pregnant or postpartum. Please share york.ca/COVID19Vaccine for more information on COVID-19 vaccines, including clinics where your patients can get vaccinated today.

For additional questions, health care providers can call our dedicated line at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280 (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday) and visit york.ca/healthprofessionals

COVID-19 IN PREGNANCY CAN PUT YOU AT HIGHER RISK

DISCUSS VACCINATION WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER — BEFORE, DURING OR AFTER PREGNANCY

Pregnancy can come with a lot of questions about what's best for your health and your future baby. The COVID-19 pandemic adds additional challenges to an already potentially stressful time.

If you are pregnant, intend to become pregnant or are postpartum, York Region Public Health recommends you discuss vaccination against COVID-19 with your health care provider or specialist. Together, you should consider your personal risk of exposure to COVID-19, the risks of severe COVID-19 during pregnancy, possible side effects and the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination.

COVID-19 vaccines are recommended during pregnancy and breastfeeding

The COVID-19 vaccines do not contain live virus and cannot cause a COVID-19 infection. There is increasing evidence available to support the safety of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) recommends all individuals who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant should receive the COVID-19 vaccination. The SOGC also recommends vaccination at any point during pregnancy and/or during breastfeeding.

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy continues to be monitored in Ontario. [Better Outcomes Registry & Network \(BORN\) Ontario](#) reports that as of June 30, 2021, almost 40,000 pregnant people in Ontario received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine between December 2020 and June 2021. Preliminary data indicates there is no increased risk during pregnancy from COVID-19 vaccination.

We **strongly recommend** any partner and family members of the pregnant individual get vaccinated as well, to reduce the chances of exposure to COVID-19.

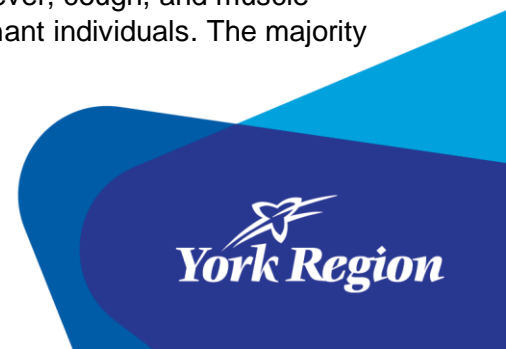
Protection against COVID-19 for the -pregnant individual may also help protect the newborn infant as well. The antibodies that a pregnant individual makes from the vaccine likely pass to the baby and may help keep the baby safe after birth.

If you are planning to get pregnant, you can complete your two-dose vaccine series before or during your pregnancy. There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility in any way.

COVID-19 infection during pregnancy

In most pregnant individuals, COVID-19 causes mild symptoms such as fever, cough, and muscle aches that will get better by themselves, similar to symptoms in non-pregnant individuals. The majority of babies born to patients with COVID-19 are healthy and full term.

However, compared to non-pregnant individuals, pregnant individuals who have COVID-19 have a **higher risk of severity**.



[The Ontario Science Table reports](#) approximately **7% to 15%** of pregnant individuals infected with COVID-19 will experience moderate to severe disease and require hospitalization. Canadian and international data suggest pregnant individuals with COVID-19 infection have a **higher risk of intensive care unit (ICU) admission and need for mechanical ventilation.**

In Spring 2021, during the third wave of COVID-19 in Ontario, many otherwise healthy pregnant patients that contracted COVID-19 became very sick, very quickly. On April 20, 2021, near the peak of the third wave, 30% of all ICU patients at Sinai Health in the City of Toronto were pregnant or postpartum.

The risk of complications or severity from COVID-19 during pregnancy or postpartum far outweigh any potential risk from COVID-19 vaccination.

York Region Public Health Cares

Visit york.ca/COVID19 for the latest information on COVID-19 in York Region. You can also visit york.ca/COVID19Vaccine for information on vaccination, including where to locate a clinic to receive your shot. Walk-ins are accepted at all York Region Public Health clinics; you can receive a COVID-19 vaccine today.

You can also call our Health Connection line at **1-800-361-5653** or [chat online](#) with a **Public Health Nurse** with any questions about pregnancy, breastfeeding or infant feeding, mental health or COVID-19

Additional Resources

York Region Public Health – [Becoming a parent during COVID-19](#)

Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) – [Vaccination in Pregnancy FAQ for health care providers](#)

Ontario Midwives – [COVID-19 Clinical FAQ](#)

[Better Outcomes Registry and Network \(BORN\) Ontario](#)

Health Canada – [COVID-19: Pregnancy, childbirth and caring for a newborn](#)

Ontario Ministry of Health – [COVID-19 Vaccination Special Populations: Vaccinations in Pregnancy & Breastfeeding Decision-Making Support Tool](#)