

Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance



Office of the Medical Officer of Health

19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
Jersey | JE2 3RR

Recipient's name
Position, Company
Road name
Town
County/Country
Postcode

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Dear expectant parent,

Importance of COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy

I hope that this letter finds you in good health during your pregnancy. I am writing to you today to address some concerns you may have regarding COVID-19 vaccination. I know the pandemic has caused a lot of concern about both the virus and the vaccination so you may have questions about the impact these have on you and your baby.

You are at more risk from COVID-19 than women of the same age who are not pregnant.

As a pregnant woman you are in the moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) group. Therefore, you are eligible for two primary doses of the vaccine and may be eligible for a booster dose depending on your age. The booster dose can be administered once three months or more have passed since the second dose.

Although it is uncommon for pregnant women to become seriously ill after catching COVID-19, the risk increases later in pregnancy and some women require substantial hospital treatment, ventilation support and intensive care. In the UK, one in five of the most critically ill Coronavirus patients are unvaccinated expectant mothers.

If you are hospitalised with COVID-19 later in pregnancy, you are twice as likely to have a still birth, and two to three times more likely to have your baby preterm. One in five of these babies delivered preterm require care in the neonatal unit.

There is no evidence COVID-19 causes miscarriage or affects your baby's development.

Around the world, hundreds of thousands of women have been vaccinated against COVID-19 and no safety concerns have been identified. In the UK, well over 84,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated against COVID-19 - all of which have had good birth outcomes with no difference in stillbirths, low baby birthweights and premature births between vaccinated women and unvaccinated women.

However, if you catch COVID-19 there is increased risk to you and your baby. The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) are urging pregnant women to get vaccinated as catching COVID-19 during pregnancy approximately doubles the chance of stillbirth and triples the chance of preterm birth.

The vaccine is not in the trial stage and has been recommended by medical experts.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) recommend that pregnant women receive two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine as your primary vaccination course, as well as a booster dose, in order to have the best possible defence against COVID-19.

The MHRA continue to reassure pregnant women that the vaccines are safe and effective for them to receive at any stage of pregnancy. There is no impact on fertility, and this has been made very clear by senior clinicians, independent experts from a number of groups such as RCOG, RCM and the British Fertility Society.

The vaccines do not contain live coronavirus and cannot infect you or your unborn baby.

Like all medicines, some people do experience some of the more common side effects which may last a few days. These are neither commoner nor more severe in pregnancy. It may be helpful to make sure you know what to expect after you have the vaccine.

Underlying clinical conditions

Pregnant women with underlying clinical conditions are at even higher risk of suffering serious complications from COVID-19. Such underlying conditions include:

- immune problems
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- asthma

Your risk of COVID-19 is further increased if you are:

- overweight
- over the age 35
- in your third trimester of pregnancy (over 28 weeks)
- of Black and Asian or minority ethnic background

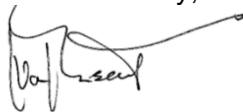
With COVID-19 cases increasing on Island and the emergence of the Omicron variant, I hope this letter has helped to increase your confidence regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. If you have not already been vaccinated, I strongly encourage you to afford yourself and your unborn baby the protection that vaccination provides.

Pregnant women are able to go to Fort Regent's Vaccination Centre without a booked appointment on Wednesdays to get their first dose. Or if you prefer to book an appointment for an alternative day or to secure a specific time slot, visit: gov.je/vaccine

If you have other concerns that I have not addressed, you should discuss this further with your midwife. I would like to reiterate once again that the data I have seen first-hand, as well as the evidence available worldwide is hugely reassuring and show that vaccines are the best way pregnant women can protect themselves and their baby against COVID-19.

You can also find more information about COVID-19 vaccines on gov.je/vaccine.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Ivan Muscat MBE, Deputy Medical Officer of Health