



Pregnancy, breastfeeding and fertility: COVID-19 vaccination

You should get vaccinated to protect yourself from serious illness with COVID-19 if you are:

- pregnant
- trying for a baby or might get pregnant in the future (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/pregnancy/#if-you-are-trying-for-a-baby>)
- breastfeeding (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/pregnancy/#if-you-are-breastfeeding>)

Booster doses while pregnant

If you have never had a COVID-19 booster, you can get a booster at any stage in your pregnancy.

Wait 4 months after your last COVID-19 vaccine or COVID-19 infection.

If you had a booster before this pregnancy

You can get a COVID-19 booster once in this pregnancy. Wait 6 months after your last COVID-19 vaccine or booster.

The best time to get your booster dose is between 20 and 34 weeks. But you can get it at any stage of pregnancy.

If it has been more than 12 months since you had a COVID-19 vaccine or infection, you may be offered a booster dose earlier in your pregnancy.

If you have a weak immune system

You usually only need one booster dose in pregnancy. But if you have a weak immune system, you can get a second booster 6 months after your last COVID-19 vaccine or infection.

If you have not had any COVID-19 vaccines yet

If you have not had any COVID-19 vaccines, you can get your first round of COVID-19 vaccination at any stage of your pregnancy.

You will be offered 2 doses, 4 to 8 weeks apart.

How to get vaccinated

You can choose to:

- go to your GP if they are offering COVID-19 vaccination
- book an appointment with a participating pharmacy (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/pharmacies-covid-19/>)

Which vaccine

You will be offered the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

You may be offered a different type of vaccine if you have an allergy or choose not to get a mRNA vaccine. Talk to your doctor or vaccinator for advice.

Read about COVID-19 vaccine types (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/vaccine-types/>)

COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines

If you are due to get a flu or pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine, you can get a COVID-19 vaccine at the same time.

Flu vaccines are usually offered between October and April.

The whooping cough vaccine is recommended between 16 and 36 weeks of pregnancy. It is usually available throughout the year from your GP.

If you have recently received a Mpox vaccine (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/monkeypox/vaccine/>), wait 4 weeks before you get the COVID-19 vaccine. This is a precaution because of the unknown risk of myocarditis. Myocarditis is an inflammatory heart condition.

COVID-19 infection during pregnancy

Most pregnant women who get the virus get mild to moderate symptoms. They give birth as planned and the risk of passing on COVID-19 to their baby is low.

But you are more likely to get very unwell and need treatment in intensive care than a woman who is not pregnant. The virus may also cause complications for your baby (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/people-at-higher-risk/covid19-and-pregnancy/>).

Vaccination protects you and your baby

Being vaccinated will reduce the chance of you becoming very unwell from COVID-19 and reduce the chance of complications for your baby.

COVID-19 vaccines are not shown to have any negative effect on babies in the womb. They may help protect your baby after birth as you may pass on antibodies from the vaccine to your baby.

Children under the age of 1 are at higher risk of hospitalisation and severe illness from COVID-19. Young babies whose mothers were vaccinated in pregnancy were less likely to need hospital care with COVID-19.

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy gives you, and your baby, the best possible protection from COVID-19

Read more about COVID-19 and pregnancy (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/people-at-higher-risk/covid19-and-pregnancy/>)

Evidence shows COVID-19 vaccines are safe

Pregnant women in Ireland have been safely getting the COVID-19 vaccine since May 2021. There has been no increase in reported side effects from COVID-19 vaccines for pregnant women or their babies anywhere in the world.

But COVID-19 vaccines are new. We are still learning about them. There is limited data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy. They were not tested on pregnant women during clinical trials.

The COVID-19 vaccines are not live vaccines. This means they cannot give you or your baby COVID-19. The vaccine doses are rapidly broken down in your body. They cannot become part of your or your baby's DNA.

If you decide not to get vaccinated

You may decide to wait until your baby is born or until you have more information before getting a vaccine.

If you wait, there is a greater risk you will become very unwell if you get COVID-19. There are also risks for your baby.

Take extra care to protect yourself against COVID-19 (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/preventing-the-spread/protect-yourself-and-others/>) if you decide not to get vaccinated.

Avoid situations where you could pick up the virus. This includes crowded areas.

If you are trying for a baby

You do not need to leave any gap between having your COVID-19 vaccine and:

- trying to get pregnant
- having fertility treatment (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/fertility/fertility-treatment/>), such as IVF

Fertility and COVID-19 vaccination

There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination affects fertility. Do not put off having a vaccine because you are hoping to get pregnant.

If you are breastfeeding

You can get a COVID-19 vaccine if you are breastfeeding. This will protect you from getting seriously unwell due to COVID-19.

You can continue to breastfeed safely after being vaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccines do not affect breastfed babies. There is no known reason to avoid breastfeeding if you are vaccinated.

Getting a vaccine cannot infect your baby with COVID-19.

If you were vaccinated while pregnant, antibodies against COVID-19 may pass into your first breast milk or colostrum (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/breastfeeding/a-good-start/your-first-breast-milk-or-colostrum/>). This may give some protection from the virus to your baby.

Side effects

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild to moderate and do not last long.

You can take paracetamol if you have a fever (temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or higher). Do not take ibuprofen or aspirin.

COVID-19 side effects (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/side-effects/>)

This content was fact checked by vaccine experts working in Ireland.

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More in Getting your COVID-19 vaccine (Link: </screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/>)

Where to get vaccinated

About COVID-19 vaccination (Link: </screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/about-covid-19-vaccination/>)

Booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine (Link: </screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/covid-19-vaccine-booster-dose/>)

Find a pharmacy giving COVID-19 vaccines (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/pharmacies-covid-19/>)

Children

How to get a COVID-19 vaccine for children (Link: </screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/children/>)

Deciding on COVID-19 vaccination for children (Link: </screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/covid-19-vaccination-for-children/>)

Walk-in clinics for children (Link: </services/covid-19-vaccination-centres/>)

Weak immune system

Weak immune system and COVID-19 vaccines (Link: </screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/weak-immune-system/>)

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

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