

# ASK THE EXPERT



## COVID-19 Vaccine & Pregnancy: Keeping Mom & Baby Safe during the Pandemic

We know parents-to-be want to protect themselves and their babies from illness, but they may have questions about the risks and benefits of COVID-19 vaccines. We spoke with Lisa Harris, MD, vice president of medical affairs at Excellus BCBS, for the answers you need.

### Q. Why are health care providers recommending COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy?

- ✔ **Women who are pregnant now, or recently gave birth, have a greater risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19.**

If you're pregnant, you're three times as likely to need intensive care for COVID-19 than someone who isn't. You're also two to three times as likely to need a breathing tube. The disease has also been linked to preterm births, stillbirths, and other complications.

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 reduces these risks. For this reason, medical groups agree: Pregnant women should get the vaccine as soon as they can. If you're fully vaccinated already, ask your provider if you should get a booster shot.

### Lisa Y. Harris, MD, FAAP, FACP, CPE

Lisa Y. Harris, MD is Vice President of Medical Affairs at Excellus BlueCross BlueShield. She is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians, Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and a Certified Physician Executive through the American Association of Physician Leaders. Board certified in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics, Dr. Harris has been in clinical practice since 1995.

### Q. Will the COVID-19 vaccine cause problems with my pregnancy or harm my baby?

- ✔ **No, the vaccines won't cause you to lose your baby or decrease your fertility.** Clinical trials have found no link between COVID-19 vaccines and health problems in babies. Finally, none of the COVID-19 vaccines contain live virus. So, you can't get COVID-19 from them, nor can your child.

### Q. That's good to know, Dr. Harris. Do the shots have any other downsides?

- ✔ **Within the first three days after your vaccination, you may have mild to moderate side effects.**

These include fever, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. They're normal signs your body is making antibodies against COVID-19. Because fever can cause problems during pregnancy, you should take acetaminophen if your temperature rises.

Rare side effects include blood clots and allergic reactions. These risks don't outweigh the benefits. The only people who shouldn't get the vaccine are those with an allergy to the vaccine or one of its components.

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## Q. Does getting the COVID-19 vaccine protect my baby, too?

- ✔ **You may be able to pass COVID-19 antibodies to your baby through the umbilical cord or breast milk.** Scientists are still learning more about how much immunity this provides. But it's welcome news since babies can't be vaccinated.



## Q. Do I need to get approval from my health care provider before I get vaccinated?

- ✔ **No. You can get the shot anytime.** COVID-19 vaccines are now available and safe for adults and children older than age 5, including pregnant people. Check with your doctor to answer any questions you may have and consider getting others in your household vaccinated when possible.

The information in this document is current as of December 6, 2021. For the latest information on COVID-19, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention online at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)  
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