

## Patient Information

### Vaccinations Before, During, and After Pregnancy

Protecting yourself during pregnancy is one of the best ways to safeguard your baby's health. Vaccines play a crucial role by helping your body develop antibodies, which pass through the placenta and give your baby important early immunity. Here's a comprehensive guide to recommended immunisations around pregnancy, their timing, and why they matter.

#### Why Are Vaccines Important in Pregnancy?

- **Protect both mother and baby:** During pregnancy your immune system changes, increasing risks from infections like the flu and whooping cough.
- **Provide early immunity for babies:** Newborns benefit from antibodies passed on by their vaccinated mother, giving critical protection before their own vaccinations can start.
- **Reduce risk of severe outcomes:** Flu, whooping cough, and RSV can cause hospitalization or serious complications in mothers and infants, but vaccination significantly lowers these risks.

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#### Recommended Vaccines During Pregnancy

Vaccine	When to Have It	Why It's Important	Is Medicare rebated?
Influenza (Flu)	Anytime during pregnancy	Prevents severe flu, complications for mum & baby. Lowers risk of preterm birth, stillbirth, and hospitalization.	Yes (in Australia)
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	20–32 weeks (preferably at 28 weeks)	Protects baby from whooping cough until their own vaccine at 6 weeks; greatly lowers risk of hospitalization.	Yes (in Australia)
RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)	28–36 weeks (preferably at 28 weeks)	Shields newborns from RSV—can cause severe respiratory illness and is a leading cause of hospitalization in infants.	Yes (in Australia)
COVID-19	Anytime during pregnancy	Protects against severe COVID-19 for both mother and baby. Particularly important if you have not yet been vaccinated.	Yes

#### Key Points

- Receiving the flu and whooping cough vaccines is recommended even if you have been immunised in the past; protection fades over time and every pregnancy needs its own dose.
- All recommended vaccines are inactivated (not live) and have been shown to be safe during pregnancy.



## Vaccines to Consider Before Pregnancy

Some vaccines should ideally be given before becoming pregnant:

- **Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)**
- **Varicella (Chickenpox)**
- **Hepatitis B (if not already vaccinated)**

Let your obstetrician or healthcare provider know your medical and vaccination history, as these vaccines are not generally given during pregnancy due to the use of live-attenuated viruses.

## Vaccines After Birth

### For Mothers

- Most routine vaccines—including the flu, whooping cough, and COVID-19 vaccines—are safe immediately postpartum, even while breastfeeding.
- If you missed your whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy, you should receive it before you leave the hospital.

### For Babies

- Newborns receive their first hepatitis B dose soon after birth.
- Their next vaccinations begin at six weeks of age to provide further protection.

## What About Other Family Members?

Pregnant women's household contacts (partners, grandparents, siblings) should also be up to date with their whooping cough and flu vaccines to provide a "cocoon" of protection.

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## Other Considerations

- **International travel:** Additional vaccines may be recommended if you are travelling to areas with certain infections—discuss with your doctor the risks and benefits.
- **Mild side effects:** Vaccines can cause a brief sore arm, mild fever, or slight discomfort—serious reactions are rare and far outweighed by the benefits.
- **Breastfeeding:** Vaccination remains important for breastfeeding mothers. Not only is it safe, but vaccination during breastfeeding may provide additional antibody protection for your baby through your milk.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Are these vaccines safe during pregnancy?

Yes. The influenza, whooping cough, and RSV vaccines currently recommended are inactivated and have excellent safety profiles for both mother and baby.

### Can I receive these vaccines together?

You can safely receive more than one vaccine at the same appointment if recommended by your healthcare provider.

### What if I miss the recommended window for a vaccine?

If you miss the optimal window (especially for whooping cough or RSV), it's still worth vaccinating as soon as possible before your baby is born for some protection.

### Where can I get vaccinated?

- General practitioner (GP)
- Hospital
- Pharmacist
- Aboriginal medical service

## Further Resources

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- <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation/when-to-get-vaccinated/immunisation-for-pregnancy>
- <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/vaccinations-and-pregnancy>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/whooping-cough-vaccination>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/flu-jab>

**Remember:** Keeping up to date with pregnancy vaccinations gives your baby the best start at life. Talk to your obstetrician or healthcare team about the schedule that best fits your situation.

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For more information please visit: [www.drsaibalghosh.com](http://www.drsaibalghosh.com)

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