



The American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists
WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE PHYSICIANS

Frequently Asked Questions for Patients Concerning Vaccine Safety

How does getting vaccinated during pregnancy protect my baby?

Vaccines cause your body to make protective antibodies against the particular disease for which you are being vaccinated. Some of the antibodies from the vaccines that you get when you are pregnant are passed to your fetus. Because newborns cannot get many vaccines until they are 2–6 months of age, vaccination during pregnancy helps protect your baby from illness during the first months of life.

How do I know what vaccines I need?

Discuss with your obstetrician–gynecologist the vaccines that you have previously received. Your obstetrician–gynecologist or other health care provider will recommend the vaccines you need based on your medical history. If you are not able to get the recommended vaccines while you are pregnant, talk to your obstetrician–gynecologist or other health care provider about the vaccines you may need to protect you and your family.

Are vaccines safe for me? Are they safe for my baby?

Vaccination is one of the most important things that you can do to protect your health and your baby's health. Vaccines help protect you and your baby from many life-threatening diseases. Most vaccines are safe for you and your fetus to get during pregnancy. For example, flu shots have been given safely to millions of pregnant women for more than 50 years. Vaccines made with live-attenuated viruses should not be given during pregnancy. These include the nasal spray flu vaccine, the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, and the measles–mumps–rubella (MMR) vaccine.

I have heard that some vaccines have mercury in them. Is it safe to get these vaccines during pregnancy?

Yes. Thimerosal, a type of mercury, has been removed from most vaccines that you can get in the United States. It is only present in trace amounts in certain versions of the flu vaccine. It has not been shown to be harmful to pregnant women or fetuses. It does not cause autism. The benefits of preventing life-threatening illnesses in a mother and child far outweigh any potential risks of the vaccine.

Where can I find more information about vaccines for me and my family?

To find accurate, trusted information, visit www.immunizationforwomen.org, www.cdc.gov, and www.flu.gov.

RESOURCES

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
www.immunizationforwomen.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Vaccine Safety
www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety

This information is designed to aid practitioners in assessing their patients' immunization needs. This guidance should not be construed as dictating an exclusive course of treatment or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to the institution or type of practice. Please be advised that this guidance may become out-of-date as new information becomes available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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