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Vaccination Information

COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women

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The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) acknowledges the risk posed to the community, healthcare workers, and all patients, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. RANZCOG also recognises our responsibility to respond to this situation as a large organisation, and also as a medical college, and health leader.

The College respects the role of government, health departments and health administrators in coordinating a national response in Australia and New Zealand. The College has already issued general advice for healthcare workers and pregnant patients. The purpose of this communiqué is to address the issue of vaccination for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Several respected bodies, including Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have issued advice on this subject. The experience of the pandemic in other countries has been significantly different. The following advice takes into consideration the low level of community transmission in Australia and New Zealand.

It is expected that the large majority of pregnant women infected with COVID-19 will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms. However, pregnant women are potentially at increased risk of complications from any respiratory disease due to the physiological changes that occur in pregnancy. These include reduced lung function, increased oxygen consumption and changed immunity. In particular, pregnant women with co-morbidities are at higher risk of hospital admission, ventilation and severe illness.



Currently there is no evidence of an increased risk of miscarriage or teratogenicity. There is a possibility of vertical transmission of the COVID-19 virus and an increased incidence of third trimester premature birth, probably as a result of medical intervention for maternal illness.

Different technologies have been adopted to develop the six major vaccines that have undergone clinical trials. These include the use of novel mRNA vaccines, viral vectors and inactivated viral particles. They do not contain live virus and they cannot transmit COVID-19. They all aim to evoke an immune response against coronavirus. Australia and New Zealand have secured stocks of different vaccines for COVID-19. This following advice is general, recognising differences in regimens and efficacy. It is uncertain as to the extent to which COVID-19 vaccines protect against acquiring the disease, or limit transmission, but initial data has demonstrated reduction in the length and severity of disease if a person were to become infected.

Based on known data from other similar vaccines, it is unlikely that COVID-19 vaccines pose a risk to a pregnant woman or her fetus. RANZCOG, and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) now recommend the following. This aligns with the advice from the New Zealand Ministry of Health.

RANZCOG and ATAGI recommend that pregnant women are routinely offered Pfizer mRNA vaccine (Cominarty) at any stage of pregnancy. This is because the risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 is significantly higher for pregnant women and their unborn baby. Global surveillance data from large numbers of pregnant women have not identified any significant safety concerns with mRNA COVID-19 vaccines given at any stage of pregnancy. Furthermore, there is also evidence of antibody in cord blood and breastmilk, which may offer protection to infants through passive immunity. Pregnant women are encouraged to discuss the decision in relation to timing of vaccination with their health professional. Women who are trying to become pregnant do not need to delay vaccination or avoid becoming pregnant after vaccination.

Read the joint RANZCOG and ATAGI statement

(<https://www.health.gov.au/news/joint-statement-between-ranzcog-and-atagi-about-covid-19-vaccination-for-pregnant-women>).

New Zealand

Ministry of Health (<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-advice-specific-groups-and-health-conditions#pregnant>)

Immunisation Advisory Centre (<https://covid.immune.org.nz/news-insights/updated-advice-vaccination-and-pregnancy>)



midwife and/or doctor.

The circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic are unprecedented and knowledge is rapidly evolving. RANZCOG will continue to monitor available data and issue updated advice as evidence emerges.

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Release of Australian Endometriosis Guideline

RANZCOG has welcomed the release of guidelines designed to diagnose and manage endometriosis.

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NEWS

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