

Pregnancy and Immunisation

During pregnancy, changes to your immune system mean that you may be more at risk of some infections and illnesses which may be harmful to you and your baby.

Immunisation can protect you and your baby against some of these infections. It is important that you discuss immunisation with your doctor or health care provider.

What vaccinations should I have before becoming pregnant?

Vaccinating prior to pregnancy will protect you and your baby from vaccine preventable infections both before and after birth. Before becoming pregnant, you should make sure you are fully immunised against hepatitis B, measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox), diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough). Your immunity to some of these diseases will be checked as a part of your antenatal health check. If your immunisation status for a particular disease remains unknown, please discuss with your doctor or health care provider.

It is recommended that you wait 28 days before becoming pregnant following the administration of a live viral vaccine such as measles, mumps, rubella and chicken pox. Your doctor or health care provider can advise you about these vaccinations.

What vaccinations can I have while I am pregnant?

Influenza vaccine and the Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (dTpa) vaccine are the only vaccinations routinely recommended for all pregnant women. These vaccines are provided free to pregnant women. The influenza vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy and the dTpa vaccine is recommended at 28 weeks gestation but can be given from this time up until the baby is born.

Influenza can cause serious illness and being pregnant increases the risk of serious complications for both you and your baby.

Whooping cough is a highly infectious respiratory illness. Newborn babies are particularly susceptible. Maternal vaccination in the third trimester of pregnancy is a protective measure until the newborn can be vaccinated at 6 weeks of age. This added benefit is due to direct passive protection of the newborn by transfer of high levels of pertussis antibodies from the vaccinated woman to the unborn baby through the placenta. The optimal time for vaccination is between 28 and 32 weeks gestation, but the vaccine can be given at any time during the third trimester up to delivery. Early third trimester vaccination is preferred because pertussis antibody levels do not peak until approximately 2 weeks after vaccination and active transport of maternal antibody to the fetus occurs predominantly from 30 weeks gestation onwards.

Other vaccines

In addition to these vaccines, some other vaccines are safe during different stages of pregnancy. They may be recommended if you have particular health concerns, travelling overseas, or are exposed to a vaccine preventable disease. Your doctor may recommend other vaccines and will discuss these with you if necessary.

Pregnancy is also a good time for other household members including partners, grandparents and close family to review their own immunisation status and whether they require vaccination before your baby is born.

If you were unable to be vaccinated prior to, or during pregnancy, it is recommended you receive any necessary vaccines as soon as possible after your baby is born. Breast feeding mothers are still able to be vaccinated with most vaccines; however there are some vaccines that should be

avoided. Please discuss this with your doctor or health care provider.

Should my other children be vaccinated while I am pregnant?

You should continue routine vaccinations for your other children while you are pregnant as this will help reduce the risk of you, or your new baby catching these diseases.

Useful Links

ACT Immunisation Information:

<http://health.act.gov.au/health-services/a-z-health-information/immunisation-and-vaccination>

ACT Immunisation Information Line:
(02) 6205 2300.

Related Fact Sheets

The following factsheets may be useful for obtaining information about vaccine preventable disease. They can be found at:

<http://health.act.gov.au/our-services/immunisation/forms-and-information>

- Influenza
- Measles
- Mumps
- Chicken Pox
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough) vaccination for pregnant women

Acknowledgement

NHMRC, 2013, *The Australian Immunisation Handbook*, 10th Edition.

Australian Immunisation Handbook update at <http://immunise.health.gov.au/>

Accessibility

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