

December 17, 2020

Dear Colleague,

We have reviewed the currently available COVID-19 vaccine data as well as society and governmental organization opinions about the use of the COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy. Below is some guidance we hope will be helpful to you when fielding questions from patients.

1. Have the COVID-19 vaccines been studied in pregnancy?

No, the vaccines have not been studied in pregnancy specifically. A few unexpected pregnancies occurred during the vaccine trials in participants but the outcomes of those pregnancies are unknown at this time. There are ongoing efforts to include pregnant women in current COVID-19 vaccine trials.

2. How does the vaccine work??—this text is specific to Pfizer vaccine

The COVID-19 vaccines are based on the goal of trying to get your body to make immune proteins against the COVID-19 “spike” protein. By helping your body form immune proteins (antibodies) against the spike protein scientists think that your immune system will be ready to identify and react to the virus if you were to get exposed, therefore decreasing the likelihood that you will get infected or have a severe infection. The vaccine contains the “messenger” to make a harmless piece of the virus: the viral spike protein, not the whole virus (JUST the protein). So, you cannot become infected with SARS-COV-2 from the vaccine. In the vaccine is the “messenger”, once inside your body your cells will take the “messenger” and your body will make the spike protein → your body will then recognize the spike protein and make immune cells and proteins (antibodies) against the spike protein → then you retain those immune proteins antibodies giving you some immune protection if you were to be exposed to the virus. Having immune cells and proteins ready allows your immune system to react right away before you get sick (or at least minimizing the severity of the illness).

3. Will I get sick with the vaccine? (Pfizer vaccine data)

You will not GET SARS COV2 by getting the vaccine. The virus contains only the “message” for the spike protein. There are some vaccines that are called “live” which contain the virus but the COVID-19 vaccine is NOT a live vaccine and thus there is no way for you to get SARS COV2 from the vaccine. However, when your immune system is working, sometimes there are symptoms that people notice. Often these symptoms might feel like a “flu-like” illness. This happens sometimes with other vaccines too. In the studies of the COVID-19 vaccine feeling somewhat poorly after receiving the vaccine was fairly common. Most (84%) people had a reaction at the site of the injection (Redness or soreness), over half of people felt fatigue and headache, 1/3 of people had muscle pain and chills, 15-20% of people had joint pain or fever. Scientists think these symptoms are related to the vaccine activating your immune system to make the cells and proteins against COVID-19. There were no “safety signals” meaning no dangerous safety events that occurred more commonly in participants who got the vaccine.

4. I am a pregnant healthcare worker (first responder, etc.)—should I get the vaccine?

For pregnant healthcare workers and other groups prioritized for initial vaccine distribution phases (first responders, workers in long-term healthcare facilities etc.)

- With the current information we think that benefit to COVID-19 vaccination outweighs the risk of COVID-19 disease in pregnancy.

5. When to refer the question to the provider:

- If the patient is a healthcare worker or other first responder, the message can be forwarded to the provider to allow timely vaccination decisions to be made.
- If the patient is not a healthcare worker or first responder, the provider can address the questions and their next prenatal visit.

Sincerely,

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