

Attention OB Providers: Keep Advocating for Protection Against COVID-19

Pregnant People Trust and Listen to Their Obstetric Providers

Pregnant people trust their obstetric providers to keep them and their babies healthy during a critical time. It's a unique trust.

That's why it's so important for you to keep talking to your patients about getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and staying up to date with boosters. Misinformation persists everywhere: on the internet, on TV, in conversations with family members and friends. Vaccination rates among pregnant people still lag behind those for the general population.

Patients need someone they trust who will listen to their concerns, provide them with accurate information, and advise them on how best to protect themselves and their babies.

Every patient should learn from you that:



COVID-19 illness can be more serious during pregnancy. The virus can make you very sick and affect your pregnancy.



COVID-19 vaccines work to prevent serious illness and death. They provide important protection for you and your baby.



COVID-19 vaccines are safe for you and your baby.



Your recommendation matters

Two weeks after having her second child, Lindsey tested positive for COVID-19. Although she got the vaccine as soon as possible, she decided not to get a booster during her pregnancy after talking with her OB-GYN, who was neutral about it.

Lindsey felt that she would have gotten the booster if her doctor had made a stronger recommendation.

“If I could have gone back in time, knowing that I was going to get COVID two weeks after giving birth and expose my baby to it, I wish I would have gotten boosted to protect me and my baby,” Lindsey said.

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Tips for Talking With Pregnant Patients About COVID-19 Vaccines and Boosters

- ▶ Confirm and document every patient's COVID-19 vaccination and booster status and ask them what they know about COVID-19 and pregnancy.
- ▶ Listen carefully, acknowledge your patient's perspective, answer questions, and discuss the risks of COVID-19 and pregnancy.
- ▶ Explain that getting protected against COVID-19 is now a normal part of ensuring a healthy pregnancy. COVID-19 vaccination and boosters are recommended for all pregnant people.

“Just like flu and Tdap vaccines, COVID-19 is another important vaccine to keep pregnant patients and their babies healthy. The CDC recommends the COVID-19 vaccination and boosters at any point during pregnancy.”

- ▶ Listen to and address your patient's concerns. For example, many patients complain that the COVID-19 vaccine is not 100% effective, so getting vaccinated seems “like a waste of time.” You can respond with:

“COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at keeping people from getting seriously ill and being hospitalized. The vaccines also help to reduce bad outcomes for your baby if you do get COVID-19 while pregnant.”

- ▶ Reassure your patients that the vaccines are safe for pregnant people, based on data tracking large numbers of vaccinated pregnant people over time and from your own experience with patients.

“Millions of pregnant people have been safely vaccinated against COVID-19 and delivered healthy babies. When you get vaccinated, you will pass the COVID-19 antibodies to your baby—protecting both you and your baby.”

- ▶ Reinforce that getting vaccinated during pregnancy will help protect the newborn.
- ▶ Acknowledge that patients may experience mild symptoms for 12-48 hours after getting vaccinated.

“Some patients may experience mild symptoms (sore arm, headache) for 12-48 hours after being vaccinated. However, COVID-19 vaccines will provide important protection for you and your baby.”

- ▶ Build on the trusting relationship that you already have with your patients. Reassure them that you are their partner in helping them give birth to a healthy baby.

Reminders

- ▶ Offer COVID-19 vaccines in your office during office hours, OR, if patients are hospitalized, offer the vaccine prior to discharge! Vaccinate for COVID-19 when you are offering flu shots or other routine vaccines during pregnancy.
- ▶ If you are not vaccinating in your space, tell patients where they can get the vaccine—preferably somewhere easily accessible and familiar to them.
- ▶ Remind patients if they test positive to call their OB provider right away to discuss therapy options.



Supporting respectful care for all patients:

The Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ILPQC) is a statewide network of perinatal clinicians, nurses, hospitals, patients, community stakeholders, and public health leaders that aims to equitably improve outcomes and reduce disparities for mothers and babies across Illinois.