

Healthcare Provider Talking Points: COVID-19 Immunization for Patients who are Pregnant

All healthcare providers who see patients who are pregnant or who may become pregnant in North Dakota should be recommending and administering COVID-19 vaccines.

Throughout the pandemic, people who are pregnant have been shown to be at increased risk for severe illness due to COVID-19. As of February 14th, 2022, 2,376 pregnant persons have been infected with COVID-19 in North Dakota. Eighty-three of those cases have been hospitalized and one individual has sadly passed away. Seventy-eight (94%) of these severe cases were unvaccinated. Pregnant women with COVID-19 are shown to be at [increased risk](#) of adverse pregnancy outcomes that could include preterm birth, stillbirth, and a newborn's admission into the ICU if infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

Evidence regarding the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy continues to grow. COVID-19 vaccines are proving to be effective at reducing the rates of severe COVID-19 in pregnant women. COVID-19 vaccines have [not](#) shown an increased rate of adverse events affecting both mother and baby, including [no association](#) with preterm birth or miscarriages. Additionally, a pregnant woman's primary COVID-19 vaccine series has been shown to be [61% effective against COVID-19 hospitalization](#) amongst *infants* aged <6 months. This means that when a pregnant woman chooses to be vaccinated, they are not only choosing to protect themselves but also their baby.

Only 20% of pregnant women in 2021 in North Dakota were vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy. Of that, only 5% of doses administered to pregnant persons were given in OB-GYN offices. This is especially concerning

given that, on average, most pregnant women see their OB-GYN 10 to 15 times during their pregnancy.

Immunizations, including COVID-19 vaccines, are an important part of routine prenatal care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine (SMFM) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) strongly recommend that pregnant individuals be vaccinated against COVID-19, in addition to influenza and pertussis. Healthcare providers play an essential role in promoting and building trust in vaccinations. Clear and consistent messaging across all levels of health care needs to be followed in order for patients to feel safe and prepared to get themselves and their families immunized. It is important that all healthcare providers in North Dakota offer strong recommendations to all pregnant persons to receive COVID-19 vaccine and have them available so that those who have yet to receive their COVID-19 vaccines have convenient access to vaccination.

Resources for Healthcare Providers:

- [ACOG COVID-19 Vaccines and Pregnancy: Conversation Guide](#)
- [ACOG COVID-19 Vaccines: Tools for Your Practice and Your Patients](#)
- [SMFM: Provider Considerations for Engaging in COVID-19 Vaccine Counseling With Pregnant and Lactating Patients](#)
- [CDC Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

Resources for Patients:

- [CDC COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Vaccines for People Who Would Like to Have a Baby](#)
- [ACOG COVID-19, Pregnancy, and Breastfeeding: A Message for Patients](#)

The following are some activities that should be implemented by healthcare providers to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among their pregnant patient population...

1. If your clinic sees pregnant women and is not offering COVID-19 vaccine, enroll as a provider today and begin offering this vaccine.
2. Educate all staff on the safety and effectiveness of vaccines during pregnancy and be comfortable communicating this information to patients.
3. Assess vaccine status and discuss which vaccines pregnant women should receive and when, ideally during the first prenatal visit.
4. Offer COVID-19 vaccine and other routinely recommended vaccines at the same time.
5. If a pregnant patient declines vaccination, inquire about their reasons and have a conversation addressing these concerns. Document this discussion and continue to address concerns and offer vaccine at ongoing appointments.
6. Measure your facility's routine and COVID-19 pregnancy vaccination rates using your electronic medical record (EMR).
7. Implement standing orders for all recommended vaccines for all patients.
8. Have your EMR prompt healthcare providers on overdue vaccines for each patient.
9. Implement a reminder/recall process to proactively remind patients of immunizations.
10. Consider hosting a peer-to-peer site visit with North Dakota State University Center for Immunization Research and Education (CIRE) to learn more about COVID and COVID vaccines. For more information, please contact CIRE at ndsu.cire@ndsu.edu