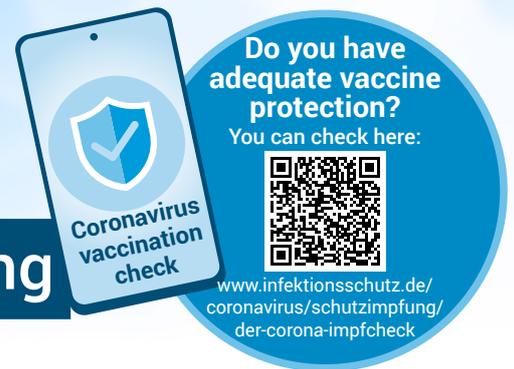


Coronavirus vaccination in pregnancy and when breastfeeding

Information for women



Are you of childbearing age? Would you like to have children or are you already pregnant? Are you breastfeeding or would like to breastfeed your child when it is born? This leaflet is intended to answer your questions and support you in your decision to have the coronavirus vaccination.

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How can I protect myself against the coronavirus?

Long-term protection against the coronavirus develops after several vaccinations or infections.

According to the German Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO), [basic immunity](#) provides protection against severe COVID-19 disease and minimises long-term effects. Basic immunity is achieved by coming into contact at least **3 times** with components of the coronavirus. Such contact can be **coronavirus vaccinations or coronavirus infections**. For the best possible basic immunity, at least one of the 3 contacts should be through vaccination.

However, it is important that there is an **adequate gap** between the contact in these cases. If the gaps are too short, then the immune system may not have sufficient time to build up longer-term protection. Therefore, if the gaps are too short, an infection does not replace a vaccination.

Vaccination at the beginning of pregnancy

Vaccinations should only be given to pregnant women from the second trimester (from the 13th week of pregnancy). Did you only realise that you were already pregnant after your first vaccination? Based on current findings, STIKO assumes that there is no danger to your child in this case either.

Is basic immunity recommended for me?

[\(STIKO\)](#) recommends basic immunity for **everyone aged 18 or over** and children from the age of 6 months with certain pre-existing medical conditions.

- Initially, **2 vaccinations** (basic immunisation) with a gap of 4 to 12 weeks.
- Then a **booster vaccination** at least 6 months after the 2nd vaccination.

If basic immunity is recommended, then the corresponding vaccinations can also be given:

- During pregnancy, from the second trimester, i.e. from the 13th week of pregnancy.
- When breastfeeding, and
- For women of childbearing age to ensure that they are protected by the vaccine before possibly becoming pregnant.

For whom are booster vaccinations recommended?

In addition to the basic immunity, some women (including pregnant women from 13 weeks of pregnancy and breastfeeding women) are recommended to have an annual booster vaccination:

- In the case of a **higher risk** of infection if women are working in nursing/care homes or medical facilities with **direct patient contact**
- If there is a **risk of getting a severe case of COVID-19** from the age of 60 or due to [certain underlying medical conditions](#)
- As **close contacts of people with a weak immune system (e.g. family members) whose immune system is unlikely to provide adequate protection after the vaccination.**

These groups of people should have the [booster vaccination](#) every autumn. However, if you **don't** have a **weak immune system** and are infected with the coronavirus during the course of the year, then you will not normally need the respective booster vaccination. Booster vaccinations should preferably be given with [mRNA vaccines](#) adapted to the latest coronavirus variants.

A [flu vaccination](#) in the autumn is also recommended for pregnant women. A COVID-19 vaccination and flu vaccination can usually be given at the same appointment. The vaccinations can generally be given in two different arms.

What are the benefits of the coronavirus vaccination for me if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

The coronavirus vaccination is intended to reduce **complications in the mother and child** as a result of a coronavirus infection. These include:

- Severe COVID-19 disease
- Certain pregnancy diseases
- Premature births, induction of labour or caesarean sections.

Protective antibodies are formed against the coronavirus once a person has received the coronavirus vaccination. These antibodies can reach the unborn child and provide some protection in the first months of life. The antibodies can also be passed on to the child during breastfeeding through the mother's breast milk. The extent to which these antibodies from the mother's breast milk can protect the child has not yet been conclusively clarified.

Good to know:

- COVID-19 vaccinations have **no effect on fertility**. However, as with other vaccinations, some women may find that their cycle is temporarily delayed.
- Based on current knowledge, vaccinating the mother during pregnancy or the breastfeeding period has **no adverse effects on the child**. You can also continue to breastfeed as usual **after the vaccination**.
- Different COVID-19 vaccines are recommended depending on the age group and situation. Ask the doctor giving you the vaccination about this.

Can contracting COVID-19 in pregnancy be dangerous for me or my unborn child?

In some cases, yes it can. Pregnant women **often experience more severe symptoms of COVID-19 than** other women: In the event that they contract COVID-19, they tend to experience **inflammation of the lungs more frequently** than other women or may need to be admitted to an **ICU unit** and put on a ventilator.

This is especially true if they have an **underlying health condition**, such as severe obesity, diabetes or high blood pressure, or are older than 35.

If you develop COVID-19 during pregnancy, you have a heightened risk of suffering certain **disorders during pregnancy**, such as pregnancy toxaemia (pre-eclampsia). Under certain circumstances, this may lead to the birth being prematurely induced or the need for a caesarean section.

What vaccine reactions can occur?

The vaccines are generally **well tolerated**. They can lead to normal vaccination reactions such as pain at the injection site, fatigue, headache or even fever. The symptoms usually disappear again after a few days. Severe [side effects](#) are **very rare**.

Where can I get vaccinated?

You can get vaccinated in medical practices, through gynaecologists and company doctors and in pharmacies. Vaccination is free of charge.

Why are hygiene rules still important?

Coronavirus vaccination provides good protection against severe COVID-19. However, it cannot provide full protection.

Certain [behavioural measures](#), such as hand washing and wearing a mask, can help to protect against the coronavirus and other respiratory infections.

More information:

www.infektionsschutz.de/coronavirus/schutzimpfung/impfung-bei-schwangeren-und-stillenden/

Federal Ministry of Health:
www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus/