

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 13, 2021

To: Primary Care Providers and Primary Care Partners

From: Alberta Health Services

RE: COVID-19 Immunization and Pregnancy

Dear colleagues,

You are no doubt answering questions from pregnant patients, or those considering pregnancy, about COVID-19 immunization. Thank you for continuing to encourage patients to be vaccinated as soon as possible. The fourth wave of COVID-19 and the Delta variant could have significant adverse effects on unvaccinated pregnant patients, and the situation is concerning due to the following factors:

- In August 2021, six pregnant Albertans were admitted to ICU due to COVID-19. All of them were unimmunized. Only seven pregnant Albertans were admitted to ICU for COVID-19 during the entire first year of the pandemic from March 2020 to March 2021 (Ref: [1](#)).
- In the six cases we saw last month, not only has COVID-19 had severe impacts on the parents' health, but also the child's. Five preterm births occurred as early as 29 weeks.
- Pregnant patients are at a higher risk of severe disease and complications, such as ICU admission requiring ventilation and preterm birth (Ref: [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). The threshold for admission is lower and they can get sick faster.
- Pregnant women with co-morbidities such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease are potentially at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease (Ref: [5](#)).

This memo is part of a broader communication strategy to healthcare providers across the province who are caring for pregnant patients in hospital and community settings. Its purpose is to clarify key messages for use with pregnant patients, provide the evidence behind current guidance, and reaffirm what resources are available for providers and to share with patients.

The core message is that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective for pregnant individuals and their babies, with mRNA vaccines being the safest type of COVID-19 vaccine to get during pregnancy. Patients can get the vaccine at any time, during any trimester, of pregnancy. A viral vector vaccine may be offered to pregnant individuals when other COVID-19 vaccines are contraindicated or inaccessible (Ref: [6](#), [7](#), [8](#)).

Several resources are available to support conversations with patients who are pregnant, or thinking of getting pregnant, to help them make an informed decision about getting the COVID-19 vaccine:

- ahs.ca/vaccinepregnancy
- [Alberta COVID-19 Immunization in Pregnancy Factsheet for Practitioners](#)
- [Adult COVID-19 Primary Care Management Pathway](#)
- [COVID-19 Immunization in Pregnancy – What You Need to Know](#)
- [COVID-19 and Pregnancy, Birth, and Postpartum and Breastfeeding: Information for Expectant and New Parents Public Health](#)

- [Video: COVID-19 Vaccine and Pregnancy](#)
- ahs.ca/covidPHC COVID-19 information for primary care providers

Additionally, the following messages are provided to help guide your conversations with patients:

What are the risks of being infected with COVID-19 if I'm pregnant?

- You are at a higher risk of being admitted to hospital and developing complications that need intensive care.
- You are more likely to have a premature birth and this may put your baby's health at risk.
- Serious complications related to COVID-19 are more common if you're pregnant than if you're not pregnant (for individuals of child bearing age).

What's right for you?

- Different people have different feelings and concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine, and that's ok. But we should all have the same information and support each other to learn more.
- We encourage everyone to review current information and evidence in order to make the best and most informed decision about your health and the health of your baby.
- We encourage you to speak with your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns. In consultation with them, you can determine if the benefits of immunization outweigh potential risks based on your health and circumstances.

Getting the vaccine

- Book your immunization appointment at an AHS clinic at ahs.ca/covidvaccine, call Health Link at 811 or contact your local pharmacy
- Learn more at ahs.ca/vaccinepregnancy

Please distribute this message among your members and teams. If you have general COVID-19 related questions, please contact PHC@ahs.ca. Thank you in advance for your support and involvement.

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