Pregnant Women Urged to Get COVID-19 Vaccine

Michelle Winokur, DrPH, and the AfPA Governmental Affairs Team, Alliance for Patient Access (AfPA)

The Alliance for Patient Access (allianceforpatientaccess.org), founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants. In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access (IfPA), a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. In keeping with its mission to promote a better understanding of the benefits of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality healthcare, IfPA sponsors policy research and educational programming.

“A federal health advisory from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention follows the release of new data showing a 70% increased risk of death from COVID-19 during pregnancy. Unvaccinated pregnant women also have a higher risk of early delivery or stillbirth.”

Public health officials are urging pregnant and breastfeeding moms to get the COVID-19 vaccine – and soon.

A federal [health advisory](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention follows the release of new data showing a 70% increased risk of death from COVID-19 during pregnancy. Unvaccinated pregnant women also have a higher risk of early delivery or stillbirth.

Pregnancy and Vaccine Safety

As part of their campaign to encourage pregnant women to get inoculated, Federal health officials are highlighting the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. As the health advisory notes, the vaccine does not increase the risk of miscarriage or birth defects or affect fertility.

The COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for pregnant women, recently pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant. Professional medical organizations have endorsed these recommendations, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

COVID-19 Among Pregnant Women

Despite the benefits to mothers and their unborn babies, only 31% of pregnant women are vaccinated against COVID-19. Being unvaccinated leaves expectant moms vulnerable to contracting COVID-19, while pregnancy makes them more likely to experience severe symptoms and require intensive-level care.

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In contrast, getting vaccinated protects both expectant moms and her baby. Getting vaccinated is the single most effective way to prevent serious illnesses, death, and adverse pregnancy outcomes from the coronavirus.

A Precaution Not to be Overlooked

Women who are planning to get pregnant take many steps to prepare. Likewise, expectant moms pay extra attention to their health and safety for the sake of their babies.

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is one precaution they should not overlook. The sooner, the better, say the experts.

References:

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/han/2021/han00453.asp>

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Still a Premie?

Some premies are born months early, at extremely low birthweights. They fight for each breath and face nearly insurmountable health obstacles.

But that's not every premie's story.

Born between 34 and 36 weeks' gestation?

STILL A PREMIE

Just like premies born much earlier, these "late preterm" infants can face:

And their parents, like all parents of premies, are at **risk** for postpartum depression and PTSD.

Born preterm at a "normal" weight?

STILL A PREMIE

Though these babies look healthy, they can still have complications and require NICU care.

But because some health plans determine coverage based on a premie's weight, **families of babies that weigh more may face access barriers and unmanageable medical bills.**

Born preterm but not admitted to the NICU?

STILL A PREMIE

Even if preterm babies don't require NICU care, they can still face health challenges.

Those challenges can extend through childhood, adolescence and even into adulthood.

Some Premies

- Will spend weeks in the hospital
- Will have lifelong health problems
- Are disadvantaged from birth

All Premies

- Face health risks
- Deserve appropriate health coverage
- Need access to proper health care

NCJH National Coalition for Infant Health
Protecting Access for Premature Infants through Age Two
www.infanthealth.org