

# IMMUNIZATIONS AND PREGNANCY

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IMMUNIZATIONS AND PREGNANCY

Vaccines are one of the many ways to support a healthy pregnancy for both you and the baby. Did you know that immunity is passed along to the baby during pregnancy and through breast milk? This will help protect the baby from some diseases – like measles, pertussis (whooping cough) and many more – during the first few months of life until the baby is old enough for their own vaccines.



### Pre-Pregnancy

Before becoming pregnant, it is important to be up to date on routine adult vaccines to help protect yourself and the baby during pregnancy. Being vaccinated helps lower the risk of complications and the risk of passing an infection on to your baby. Some vaccines cannot be given during pregnancy so it is important to speak with a health care provider about any vaccines you may need when planning for a healthy pregnancy. “Live” vaccines, like the MMR (which protects against measles, mumps, rubella) should be given at least one month before pregnancy.

### Measles (MMR) Vaccine

If you are not up to date with your MMR vaccine (two doses after your first birthday) you should receive your MMR dose at least one month before becoming pregnant. The MMR vaccine provides nearly 100% protection after two doses and has a strong safety record spanning more than 50 years. This protection will be passed on to the baby during pregnancy and through breast milk, providing immunity that helps shield the infant from measles.

If you are unsure if you are fully vaccinated against measles, speak to your health care provider. You can also check with York Region Public Health to see if your immunization records are on file.

### Public Health

1-877-464-9675  
TTY 1-866-512-6228  
[york.ca/immunizations](http://york.ca/immunizations)



## **During Pregnancy**

### **Flu and COVID-19**

It is safe and very important for you to receive the inactivated flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine in the fall (respiratory virus season). The vaccine will protect you from serious complications caused by the flu and COVID-19 viruses and will protect the baby after birth. They can be given during any trimester of pregnancy.

### **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)**

RSV is a common and contagious virus that can cause serious complications in newborns. It is the most common cause of pneumonia and bronchiolitis in babies under six months.

If you will deliver near the start of or during the RSV season (typically November-April) and are between 32 to 36 weeks pregnant, you are advised to get a dose of the RSV vaccine. The vaccine helps you produce antibodies that are passed on to the baby, providing your newborn with protection for up to six months.



### **Tdap Vaccine**

The Tdap vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). These are serious and deadly diseases, especially for babies. Even if you have had the Tdap vaccine before, you should get a new dose between 27 and 32 weeks of each pregnancy. Getting this vaccine during pregnancy allows you to boost your immunity and pass on protection to your baby before they are old enough to get their first dose at 2 months old.

### **Travel Vaccines**

Many vaccine preventable diseases that are rare in Canada are still common in other parts of the world. If you are planning international travel while pregnant, you should discuss vaccines with your health care provider or visit a travel clinic.

### **Protection against measles during pregnancy**

If you have received two doses of the measles containing vaccine (MMR) prior to pregnancy, you are considered protected during your pregnancy. However, if you have not had a dose or have only had one dose, you are susceptible to measles. The MMR vaccine is not given during pregnancy, so if a susceptible pregnant individual is exposed to measles, they may be offered a treatment called immunoglobulin after exposure to help prevent the exposure from turning into an infection or to reduce the severity of the infection. Speak to your healthcare provider if you think you are susceptible and may have been exposed to measles during your pregnancy.

### **Childhood Vaccines**

Pregnancy is a good time to begin learning about vaccines for your baby. Start a discussion with your partner and health care provider.

## After Pregnancy

It is safe to receive routine vaccines right after giving birth, even while breastfeeding. Some of the antibodies from vaccines will be passed on through breastmilk, however, this protection is not as strong as the antibodies that are shared during pregnancy. Talk to your healthcare provider for more information on vaccines and breastfeeding.

## For Young Infants

[Ontario's routine immunization schedule](#) outlines when your child will need to receive vaccines. The schedule is designed to provide children with the best protection against vaccine preventable diseases before they are likely to be exposed to them. Your child will receive vaccines at the following ages:

- Between birth to 2 months
- At 4 months
- At 6 months
- At 12 months
- At 18 months
- Between 4 to 6 years of age