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Covid-19: Pregnant women should be offered Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, says UK advisory committee

Elisabeth Mahase

Pregnant women should be offered the Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna covid-19 vaccine at the same time as the rest of the population, with priority based on age and clinical risk group, the government's vaccine advisory committee has said.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation said no specific safety concerns related to pregnancy have been identified, but that real world evidence from the US has shown around 90 000 pregnant women have been vaccinated—mainly with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines—without any safety concerns being raised.¹

While severe illness from covid-19 is uncommon in pregnant women, those who do get symptomatic infection are two to three times more likely to give birth prematurely, the committee said. As age is still the greatest risk factor for severe illness, it has recommended that women be invited for vaccination along with their age or clinical risk group.

Mary Ramsay, head of immunisation at Public Health England, said, “The available data on the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines provide confidence that they can be offered safely to pregnant women. The vaccines continue to save thousands of lives and it is important that we encourage as many people as possible to take up the offer when it is their turn.”

Pregnant women have been advised to discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with their clinician, including the latest evidence on safety and which vaccines they should receive. Those planning pregnancy, in the immediate postpartum, or breastfeeding can be vaccinated with any vaccine, depending on their age and clinical risk group.

Edward Morris, president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said, “Vaccination offers pregnant women the best protection from covid-19, which can be serious in some women. We believe it should be a woman's choice whether to have the vaccine or not after considering the benefits and risks and would encourage pregnant women to discuss it with a trusted source like their GP, obstetrician or midwife, or a healthcare professional in a vaccination centre.”

1 CDC. V-safe covid-19 vaccine pregnancy registry. 12 April 2021. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/vsafepregnancyregistry.html.

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