



Fact Sheet

From ReproductiveFacts.org



The Patient Education Website of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine

Are vaccinations a good idea if I'm trying to get pregnant?

Vaccines help protect against specific infections by bacteria or viruses. They are administered by a health care provider (nurse or doctor) by injection, nasal spray, or a pill taken by mouth. Vaccines usually contain small pieces of the bacteria or virus in a weakened but live or killed form. For instance, the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine is an injection containing very weakened particles of the chickenpox virus. The virus in the vaccine is not potent enough to cause an infection in most cases but it can stimulate the immune system to make antibodies. These antibodies help protect the person against future infection.

Why do I need to think about vaccines if I'm busy dealing with my fertility?

Vaccines can help prevent serious complications during pregnancy. For example, rubella is a viral infection which can lead to miscarriage or serious birth defects in a baby if an unvaccinated mother is infected while she is pregnant. Getting vaccinated before pregnancy against rubella can help prevent this infection and its serious consequences. Flu (influenza) infection can affect both mother and child. If a flu infection is contracted during pregnancy, it can lead to miscarriage or premature labor. The flu can also lead to serious lung infections in the pregnant mother and even death. The flu vaccine can prevent a pregnant woman from getting the infection or cause the infection to be less severe.

When is the best time to be vaccinated?

Some vaccines, such as the ones for hepatitis A or B or for the influenza virus, are safe to receive before and during pregnancy. Other vaccinations, such as the ones for chicken pox or rubella, contain weakened but live versions of the virus/bacteria and are best given at least a month before a woman conceives. Talk to your healthcare provider about how to schedule essential vaccines.

What are some of the side effects from vaccines?

Most people experience little to no side effects after receiving vaccines. Sometimes, after receiving a

vaccine by injection, a person might have some skin swelling or redness or muscle ache at the site of injection for intramuscular vaccines.

If you are allergic to certain medicines, foods, or other substances, discuss this with your health care provider before getting vaccinated as some vaccines might contain these substances.

I'm taking oral steroids for a health condition. Can I still get vaccinated?

Certain vaccines should not be used in patients using steroids or other medicines which affect the immune system. Make sure to discuss your health history including all medicines you take with your doctor/nurse before being vaccinated.

I'm traveling to Asia/Africa soon and I'm trying to conceive. Should I be vaccinated?

Certain infections (like yellow fever or malaria) are more common in countries outside the United States. These infections can cause serious health problems in any individual but particularly for a pregnant woman. Some of these vaccines are safe for use in pregnant women or in women trying to conceive. This should be discussed with a doctor familiar with vaccines for travelers.

Can vaccines cause autism or birth defects?

There is no medical evidence that vaccinations cause autism or other issues in children whose mothers were properly vaccinated. Instead, not being appropriately vaccinated can lead to serious health problems for both mother and child.

Where can I find more information about vaccinations?

The Center for Disease Control has a helpful website for patients at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults.

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For more information on this and other reproductive health topics, visit www.ReproductiveFacts.org