

COVID-19 Vaccine: Update #16

Those Who are Pregnant are Now Eligible to Receive COVID-19 Vaccine

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Hospital CEOs, Hospital Laboratories, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Nurse and Nurse Practitioners, EMS, Designated Officers, Midwives, Family Health Teams, Pharmacies, Central LHIN, NSM LHIN, Beausoleil First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation, Rama First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Long-term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Hospices, Coroners, Funeral Directors, Dentists, Group Homes, Homes for Special Care, Optometrists, Corrections, Municipalities

Date: April 23, 2021

The province has announced that pregnant individuals are now eligible to receive their COVID-19 vaccine through Public Health Unit (PHU) immunization clinics by booking an appointment through the provincial call centre at 1-888-999-6488.

Pregnant individuals may choose to receive the vaccine at any time during their pregnancy. However, essential consideration should be made for those in the later stages of their pregnancy.

It is recommended, but not required, that pregnant individuals have discussion with their treating health care provider, or with a health care provider familiar with their pregnancy, that includes:

- 1) a review of the potential risks and benefits of the vaccine
- 2) a review of the risk of acquiring a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy
- 3) a review of the potential risks/consequences associated with a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy
- 4) an acknowledgment of the limited evidence from clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines in the pregnant population

Please see the [COVID-19 Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations](#) and the related [Vaccination in Pregnancy & Breastfeeding Decision-Making Support Tool](#) for further details on COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant individuals.

Please Note:

- A letter from a health care provider is **not** required for vaccination.
- The extended dose interval of 16 weeks remains appropriate for this population.



Background

The Ministry of Health has noted that an increased number of critically ill pregnant individuals have been observed in wave three. During waves one and two most pregnant patients with moderate-to-severe COVID-19 associated disease had a pre-existing comorbidity; however, reports from clinicians indicate in wave three younger pregnant individuals with no co-morbidities are developing moderate-to-severe disease. Recent data from the UK, where the B.1.1.7 variant is dominant, confirm pregnant women with COVID-19 had greater likelihood to require respiratory support.

The province's Vaccine Clinical Advisory Group (VCAG) rapidly convened to review the available data relating to COVID-19 infections in pregnancy. In response to emerging data on the increased risk of severe illness for this population, VCAG recommended the inclusion of pregnant individuals in the highest-risk prioritization category allowing current eligibility to book vaccine appointments in Ontario.

This recommendation aligns with a [Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists \(SOGC\)](#) request to prioritize pregnant individuals for COVID-19 vaccination, as they currently require intensive care at a rate higher than their non-pregnant cohort. Additionally, ventilator support in pregnancy is challenging, with greater risks to both mother and child. Finally, pregnant individuals with COVID-19 have an increased risk of premature delivery, caesarean delivery, and admissions of their babies to a neonatal unit.

Additional Information

For more information about the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine in our area, please refer to the [SMDHU COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunization Webpages](#).

For more information on the province's three-phased vaccine distribution implementation plan, please visit [COVID-19 vaccines for Ontario](#).

There are a number of COVID-19 resources and documents available through our Health Professional Portal at www.smdhu.org/hpportal as well as through [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Ontario](#).