



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

OCT - 5 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY

SUBJECT: Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Service Members

On August 11, 2021 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published updated guidance on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination for pregnant and breastfeeding women ("COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding," <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>). This guidance states that "COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for all people 12 years and older, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future."

Pregnant women infected with COVID-19 are at increased risk of severe illness, hospitalization, mechanical ventilation, and death when compared to non-pregnant women. Per the CDC, a growing body of evidence on safety indicates benefits of vaccination outweigh any known or potential risks associated with COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy. As such, the CDC, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) strongly recommend that pregnant women be fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine to protect their health and the health of their unborn child.

This guidance is being promulgated on the advice of the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and informed by the recommendations of the Joint Preventive Medicine Policy Group following a review of CDC guidance, information presented by the Defense Health Agency Immunization Healthcare Division, and ACOG and SMFM recommendations. In accordance with Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of Defense Service Members," August 24, 2021, I direct that DoD requirements regarding COVID-19 vaccination of pregnant and breastfeeding Service members are as follows:


- COVID-19 vaccination is recommended in pregnant and breastfeeding women, consistent with the recommendations from the CDC, ACOG, and SMFM. Pregnant Service members should be vaccinated as part of mandatory COVID-19 vaccination of DoD Service members directed by the Secretary.
- A pregnant Service member with concerns about vaccination during pregnancy (to include COVID-19 vaccination) may request a temporary medical exemption from their health care provider, as described in paragraph 2-6.a.(1)(a) of the Multi-Service Regulation, "Immunizations and Chemoprophylaxis for the Prevention of Infectious

Diseases," October 7, 2013.¹ The request may be granted if deemed appropriate by the Service member's health care provider for a time period to be determined by the health care provider, but no longer than the underlying pregnancy.

- Service members who have completed a pregnancy or are breastfeeding are not medically exempt from COVID-19 vaccination, unless otherwise indicated.

Evolving information on COVID-19 vaccines will continue to be closely evaluated by public health and clinical experts to inform the above recommendation.

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Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.

cc:
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¹ Army Regulation 40-562, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Instruction 6230.15B, Air Force Instruction 48-110_IP, Coast Guard Commandant Instruction M6230.4GAR 40-562.