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Navy & Marine Corps COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements: Pregnant and Postpartum Service Members FAQs

I'm a pregnant service member – is the COVID-19 vaccine required for me?

Pregnant service members are required to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Speak with your healthcare provider for questions about the risks of COVID-19 and the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine. Pregnant individuals should have no barriers in receiving vaccination. Clearance from a healthcare provider is not required prior to vaccination.

Why is the COVID-19 vaccine required in pregnancy?

The benefits of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy significantly outweigh the risks. Current data suggest that pregnant people with COVID-19 are at increased risk of more severe illness compared to non-pregnant people, including risk of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) admission, needing a breathing machine, needing a machine to put oxygen in the blood because the lungs are not working, and death of the pregnant person and/or the baby. Additionally, COVID-19 infection increases risks for other bad pregnancy outcomes and preterm birth. While data does show that people can still become infected with the COVID-19 virus after vaccination (although the infection rate is much lower in vaccinated people), studies show that these people have a milder and shorter disease course when compared to an unvaccinated person infected with the virus. The CDC, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG), and Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine (SMFM) strongly recommend vaccination of pregnant people or individuals planning to become pregnant.^{1, 2, 3} Studies show that when pregnant people receive a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy, their bodies build antibodies against COVID-19. This suggests that COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy may help protect babies against COVID-19.¹

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

The most common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine include injection site reactions (redness, pain, or swelling), tired feeling, chills, muscle and joint pain, and headaches. These side effects vary from person to person and are not any different for pregnant people than for non-pregnant people. These side effects can be treated with acetaminophen. Pregnant individuals receiving the COVID-19 vaccine should be advised that if they experience fever following vaccination, they should take acetaminophen, as fever for any reason has been associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes.

Can I receive a temporary medical exemption for the COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy?

Service members may request a temporary medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination from their Department of Defense (DoD) medical provider, including Independent Duty Corpsmen, Nurse Practitioners/Certified Nurse Midwives, Physician's Assistants, Medical Doctors, and Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine. Pregnant patients who have concerns about vaccination should address their concerns with clinical consultation. Temporary medical exemptions are issued based on the provider's clinical judgement, they are not issued automatically in pregnancy. If the provider determines that it is appropriate to defer vaccination until later in pregnancy or post-pregnancy, the provider will issue a temporary medical exemption from vaccination. Temporary medical exemptions last no more than thirty days, they may be renewed for the duration of the exempted medical condition.

Can I receive any COVID-19 vaccine?

People <50 years of age should be made aware of the risk of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. While the Johnson & Johnson vaccine remains an option for people <50 years of age, other COVID-19 vaccines are available for which this risk has not been observed.

Can COVID-19 vaccines be given with other vaccines in pregnancy?

COVID-19 vaccines may be given with other pregnancy-approved vaccines without regard to timing.



Are breastfeeding service members exempt from the COVID-19 vaccine requirement?

No, breastfeeding individuals shall receive the COVID-19 vaccine and continue to breastfeed their children after vaccination. COVID-19 antibodies pass through breastmilk and protect breastfeeding children from the virus, which can occur for at least 6 weeks post-vaccination.⁴ None of the COVID-19 vaccines include live viruses that can be passed through the breast milk.

Is anyone exempt from the COVID-19 vaccine requirement?

The COVID-19 vaccine is mandatory for all service members who are not medically or administratively exempt. Permanent medical exemptions will be granted only when a service member has a medical contraindication (medical situation in which the vaccine may be harmful to an individual). According to the CDC, the only two contraindications for the COVID-19 vaccine are true anaphylaxis to the ingredients of the vaccine or previous allergic reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your healthcare provider if you think you are medically exempt in case of an allergy concern. Patient history of the COVID-19 disease does not exempt a service member from receiving a vaccine. Speak with your Chain of Command if you think you are administratively exempt (including for religious accommodations). Service members who are participating in a COVID-19 clinical trial are exempt from mandatory vaccination until the trial is complete.

What is V-safe?

V-safe is a smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Using V-safe, you can quickly tell the CDC if you have any side effects following your vaccine: <https://vsafe.cdc.gov/>.

Navy and Marine Corps Policies:

- NAVADMIN 190/21: 2021-2022 NAVY MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATION AND REPORTING POLICY ([Link](#))
- BUMEDINST 6230.15B IMMUNIZATIONS AND CHEMOPROPHYLAXIS FOR THE PREVENTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES ([Link](#))
- BUMEDNOTICE 6300: NAVY CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 VACCINE MEDICAL TEMPORARY, AND MEDICAL PERMANENT EXEMPTION FOR MEDICAL CONTRAINDICATION APPROVAL PROCESS ([Link](#))
- MARADMIN Number 462/21: MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATION OF MARINE CORPS ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENTS ([Link](#))

Additional Information for Patients:

- COVID-19 Vaccination Considerations for Obstetric–Gynecologic Care: ACOG Guidance ([Link](#))
- COVID-19 Vaccines while Pregnant or Breastfeeding: CDC Guidance ([Link](#))
- V-safe After Vaccination Health Checker ([Link](#))

References:

1. CDC, COVID-19 Vaccines While Pregnant or Breastfeeding ([Link](#))
2. ACOG, COVID-19 Vaccination While Pregnant ([Link](#))
3. SMFM, COVID-19 Vaccination if You Are Pregnant or Breastfeeding ([Link](#))
4. Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA), COVID-19 Antibodies in Breast Milk After COVID-19 Vaccination ([Link](#))