



Q&A: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination and breastfeeding

Key messages

- At this time the Australian and New Zealand Governments support the use of an approved COVID-19 vaccination in breastfeeding women.
- Breastfeeding women do not need to stop breastfeeding to receive the vaccine.
- There is no evidence of additional risks to breastfeeding women or their children from an approved COVID-19 vaccine.
- COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia and New Zealand do not contain a live virus.
- Prior to receiving the COVID-19 vaccination it is important that breastfeeding women discuss the COVID-19 immunisation with their health professional. Women should discuss the benefits and risks of having the vaccine with their healthcare professional and reach a joint decision based on individual circumstances. Breastfeeding women should not stop breastfeeding in order to be vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Research shows that antibodies made by a mother's body after having COVID-19 are available to her child via her breastmilk.
- National helplines are available for women who need help and professional advice with breastfeeding:
 - Australia: 1800 686 268
 - New Zealand: 0800 933 922

Answers to some commonly asked Questions

Q: What is Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and what are its symptoms?

A: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

[Source: WHO: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1]

Q: Can breastfeeding women receive a COVID-19 vaccination in Australia or New Zealand?

A: In Australia and New Zealand, breastfeeding women can receive an approved COVID-19 vaccine. There are no safety concerns for a breastfeeding woman or her child associated with having this COVID-19 vaccine.

[Source: New Zealand Ministry of Health: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-getting-vaccine/covid-19-who-can-get-vaccine>]

Breastfeeding women do not need to stop breastfeeding before or after COVID-19 vaccination.

[Source: Australian Government Department of Health: www.health.gov.au/covid-19vaccines]

Q: Are there complications of COVID-19 vaccination in breastfeeding women?

A: COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been studied in detail in breastfeeding women. However there are no concerns about their safety in breastfeeding women or their babies. There is no evidence that breastfeeding women have any increased risk of complications from COVID-19 compared to women who are not breastfeeding.

[Source: Australian Government Department of Health: www.health.gov.au/covid-19vaccines]

Q: Is breastfeeding contraindicated?

A: The Cochrane Group undertook a COVID-19 review of national clinical practice guidelines for key questions relating to the care of a pregnant woman and her child. The review explored the level of consensus in recommendations related to the care of a pregnant woman and her child, across 19 countries. The review concluded that breastfeeding is not contraindicated.

[Source: Cochrane Pregnancy and Childbirth: <https://pregnancy.cochrane.org/>]

Q: What steps are necessary to make an informed decision about the COVID-19 vaccination?

A: The following steps are recommended:

- If you have any questions about this information, ask your health professional (immunisation provider, doctor or midwife).
- If you are breastfeeding, you can receive an approved vaccination - Comirnaty (Pfizer) or COVID-19 Vaccine (AstraZeneca) - at any time, and do not need to stop breastfeeding after vaccination.
- If you are planning a pregnancy, you can receive an approved vaccination - Comirnaty (Pfizer) or COVID-19 Vaccine (AstraZeneca) - at any time.
- If you have an increased risk of being exposed to COVID-19, or of having severe illness, you should consider having a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy.
- You can choose to have a COVID-19 vaccine at any time during pregnancy; your immunisation provider can help you to decide the best time.
- Ensure there is a 14 day gap between having a dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine and any other vaccine (including influenza or whooping cough vaccines).

[Source: Australian Government Department of Health: www.health.gov.au/covid-19vaccines]

Q: What precautions are needed when receiving the COVID-19 vaccination

A: Breastfeeding women who decide to get vaccinated should continue to follow the current guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 after they are vaccinated. This includes hand hygiene, masks where social-distancing cannot be maintained, testing when symptoms are present and isolation, when appropriate.

[Source: RANZCOG COVID-19 Hub available at: <https://ranzcof.edu.au/statements-guidelines/covid-19-statement/covid-19-vaccination-information>]

Links to additional information to help with decision making

Source:	Type of information:	Link:
Australian Government Department of Health	A dedicated COVID-19 vaccination decision guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy. It covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia. • The possible benefits and possible risks of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. 	www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy
New Zealand Government Ministry of Health	An informative website with guidance on who can get an approved COVID-19 vaccine. This site provides information for breastfeeding women.	https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-getting-vaccine/covid-19-who-can-get-vaccine
World Health Organization (WHO)	A dedicated information page about COVID-19 vaccines safety, and specific advice for breastfeeding women.	www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-vaccines-safety
Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)	The ABA website provides detailed information on the COVID-19 vaccination program for breastfeeding women.	https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/covid-19
New Zealand Breastfeeding Alliance (NZBA)	The NZBA website provides details on finding support and helplines available for breastfeeding women. Information on the COVID-19 vaccination program for breastfeeding women can also be accessed here.	https://www.babyfriendly.org.nz/resource/finding-support/

Further enquiries

In case of further enquiries, contact: COVID-19@ranzcog.edu.au or call:

- o Australian Breastfeeding Association: 1800 686 268
- o New Zealand Breastfeeding Alliance: 0800 933 922