



## VACCINES IN PREGNANCY:

# What Family Physicians Need to Know

It's important for family physicians to talk to all their patients about getting routine vaccinations, but it is essential to have those conversations with your patients who are pregnant. The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) created this short educational fact sheet to help guide you and your health care team to effectively have conversations about vaccines before, during, and after pregnancy.

### Vaccine Recommendations for People Who Are Pregnant

Vaccinations are a vital aspect of prenatal care. They help protect people who are pregnant and their babies from preventable diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the following vaccine recommendations are for patients who are pregnant:

- Tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine:
  - Patients who are pregnant are recommended to receive the Tdap vaccine ideally between the 27th and 36th week of pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>
  - One dose of the Tdap vaccine is recommended during each pregnancy.<sup>1,2</sup>
- COVID-19 vaccine (find the latest recommendations on the [CDC's website](#)):
  - Patients who are pregnant can safely receive the COVID-19 vaccine at any stage of their pregnancy.<sup>3</sup>
  - One dose of the bivalent vaccine (Moderna or Pfizer) is recommended for optimal protection, regardless of whether any original COVID-19 vaccines were received.<sup>4</sup>
- Flu vaccine:
  - Patients who are pregnant are recommended to receive influenza vaccination during the flu season.<sup>1</sup>
  - One dose of the flu vaccine is recommended every year.<sup>5</sup>

For more detailed information on current immunization recommendations and vaccines for patients who are pregnant, visit the CDC's recommended immunization schedules for [adults 19 years or older](#) and [children and adolescents 18 years or younger](#).

### Family Physician's Role

One of family physicians' most important contributions to public health is their role in preventing diseases. In terms of vaccination, family physicians play a vital role in educating and communicating to people the importance of vaccines and their safety and efficacy in an understandable way. This helps build confidence for patients to become vaccinated.

The AAFP has provided the following tips to help you better understand your role as a vaccine champion and to consider implementing them in your practice:

- Use the [CDC's Standards for Adult Immunization Practice](#). The CDC recommends the following steps for all health care providers to ensure patients are fully immunized<sup>6</sup>:
  - Assess current immunization rates and patient immunization status at every clinical encounter
  - *Recommend* vaccines that patients need for their individual circumstances
  - *Administer* the vaccine or *refer* patients to a vaccine provider
  - *Document* all vaccines received by your patients

- Interact with patients. Family physicians interact with patients of reproductive age at many points before, during, and after pregnancy. The primary role of family physicians is to provide preventive care, prenatal care, and/or collaborate with other health care professionals (i.e., obstetricians and gynecologists).
- Use the AAFP's and CDC's immunization schedules. Each year, the AAFP and ACIP provide updates to the recommended vaccine schedule provided by the CDC. Updates can be found on the [AAFP's Immunization Schedule](#) webpage and the CDC's webpages for [adults 19 years or older](#) and [children and adolescents 18 years or younger](#).
- Communicate with patients effectively. Family physicians should begin their immunization conversations with the presumption that people who are pregnant will accept their vaccine recommendations. The steps in *Figure 1* below can help guide your discussions to effectively communicate with patients who are pregnant.

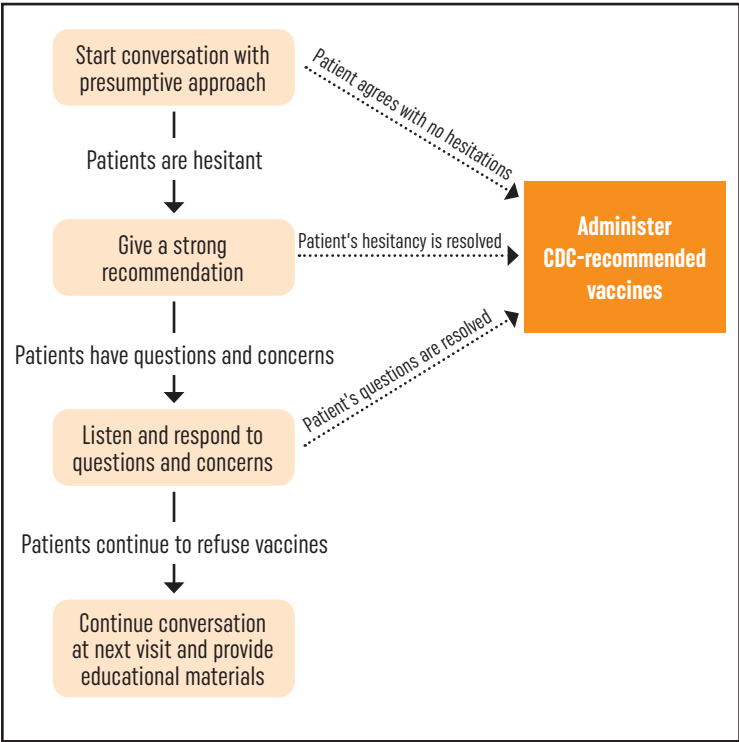
### Addressing Myths, Misinformation, and Mistrust

There is a lot of false information about vaccinations, so it is natural for patients to have questions. By addressing their concerns and sharing your professional knowledge about vaccines, you can help your patients who are pregnant feel more confident about getting vaccinated.

Other reliable resources with evidence-based information can help guide you in conversations and to share accurate vaccine information with patients. These include a [fact sheet](#) about vaccine safety during pregnancy, an [educational supplement](#) with talking points to dispel common myths, misinformation, and disinformation about vaccines during pregnancy, and [guidelines](#) for vaccinating people who are pregnant.

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**Figure 1. Steps to effectively communicate vaccine information before and during pregnancy<sup>7</sup>**



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### References

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