

Joint Statement Recommending COVID-19 Vaccination of All Pregnant Women in South Carolina

There is now a strong body of evidence that women during and after pregnancy are at much greater risk for more severe illness due to COVID-19 than other people in their age group and are more likely to have major pregnancy complications. As the delta variant has become the dominant strain of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in South Carolina and the U.S., unvaccinated pregnant women are at even greater risk of serious illness and hospitalization and for having poorer pregnancy outcomes for themselves and their newborn. All the signatories of this Joint Statement fully recommend vaccination for all pregnant women during and after pregnancy.

As a growing number of pregnant women have been fully vaccinated, ongoing, systematic surveillance for possible adverse events shows that the available vaccines are safe. There is also no credible evidence of any adverse effect from COVID vaccination on the fertility of women trying to get pregnant or on the health and development of a fetus. The vaccines are highly effective in reducing the risk of serious illness, hospitalization and pregnancy complications for women.

Of particular concern, less than 25% of pregnant women overall and less than 10% of women under age 25 in the US are fully vaccinated. To protect pregnant women against COVID-19 related complications, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) and the Society of Maternal Fetal Medicine (SMFM) have now jointly recommended COVID vaccination of all pregnant women and those trying to get pregnant and are strongly encouraging health care providers to “enthusiastically recommend vaccination” during and after pregnancy. ACOG and SMFM have also developed a well-designed vaccination conversation guide that can be accessed along with their joint statement [here](#).

In concert with the recommendations from ACOG and SMFM, the following South Carolina Joint Statement on COVID vaccination for pregnant women has been approved and is fully supported by the organizations as signatories below:

- All pregnant women in South Carolina, including those previously infected with SARS-CoV-2, should be actively encouraged to consider COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy and after by all healthcare practitioners that are involved in their prenatal and postpartum care.
- All pregnant women should be provided with available information about the safety and effectiveness of COVID vaccination and the higher risk of more serious illness and pregnancy complications from a COVID infection so they can make an informed vaccination decision.
- Family members of pregnant women are also encouraged to get vaccinated to decrease the risk of spread within households.

- Those pregnant women who choose not to or are not able to be vaccinated should be actively encouraged to use proper facial masking and physical distancing in any group setting and to limit activities that would place them in close contact with individuals other than immediate family.
- All pregnant women and the practitioners that care for them should be aware and take full advantage of CDC approved co-vaccination with the COVID vaccine and other vaccinations recommended during pregnancy (e.g. influenza, Tdap).
- All practitioners who provide pregnancy care should be aware that pregnant women from communities of color are at higher risk of more serious illness and pregnancy complications and have lower rates of COVID vaccination.
- All pregnant women who are vaccinated during or after pregnancy should be encouraged to participate in the [CDC V-Safe system](#) and enter any relevant post-vaccination health information into the smart device-based reporting tool to ensure maximum ongoing information about the safety of COVID vaccines.

Public messaging surveys show that health care providers are considered the most trusted source for COVID-19 vaccine information. Your assistance in counseling your patients with evidence-based information is urgently needed to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and the associated morbidity and mortality. We appreciate your continuing commitment to promoting and supporting COVID vaccination and other measures to prevent COVID exposure and infection in all pregnant women in your practice and under your care.

For questions, please contact the DHEC Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology at 803-898-0861, or email info@dhec.sc.gov.

SIGNATORIES (Listed Alphabetically)

American Academy of Family Physicians, South Carolina Chapter
 American Academy of Pediatrics, South Carolina Chapter*
 American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, South Carolina Chapter
 Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, South Carolina Section*
 South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiatives*
 South Carolina Children’s Hospital Collaborative
 South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
 South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services*
 South Carolina Hospital Association
 South Carolina Medical Association*
 South Carolina Office of Rural Health
 South Carolina Perinatal Association
 South Carolina Primary Health Care Association

**Signatories added August 13, 2021.*