

Vaccinations in Pregnancy

The following vaccinations are recommended during pregnancy

1. Tetanus/Pertussis

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory tract disease that affects people of all ages, however young unimmunised or partially immunised infants are the most vulnerable group with the highest rates of complications and death. Despite well-established vaccination programmes, pertussis incidence has increased in many parts of the world, with a change from whole-cell pertussis vaccine (wP) to acellular pertussis vaccine (aP) thought to be one of the main contributing factors. Data has shown that aP has lower initial efficacy, faster waning of immunity and a reduced impact on transmission compared with the wP vaccine. As a result, for countries using the aP vaccine, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends other strategies besides infant vaccination, including maternal immunisation and targeted booster doses. For countries still using wP, WHO recommends not changing to aP.

The prevalence of neonatal tetanus is currently very low in South Africa. However, WHO and the South African National Department of Health recommend booster doses of tetanus currently.

Recommendation

A single dose of Tdap (adult formulation) is recommended for all pregnant women, for every pregnancy, in the 2nd or 3rd trimester (16 weeks gestation through to 36 weeks and/or delivery) of pregnancy to protect infants too young to be vaccinated.

2. Influenza

Maternal influenza infection is associated with increased maternal and fetal morbidity and mortality. Influenza vaccination is recommended for all pregnant women prior to the winter season and can be given during all trimesters

3. Covid-19

Covid-19 infection in pregnancy is associated with adverse maternal and fetal outcomes. These include increased ICU admissions rates and increased maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. The Pfizer, Moderna, J&J and Astra Zeneca are safe during all trimesters of pregnancy. Booster doses are recommended as per National Department of Health guidelines.

