VACCINATIVE | Vaccination information for Natives by Natives

Vaccines When You Are Pregnant or Breast/Chestfeeding

Pregnancy and parenthood are sacred times when we make plans to care for ourselves and our babies. Part of this preparation includes keeping up to date on our vaccines.

While getting vaccinated is always something to discuss with your health provider, there are some important things to consider if you are pregnant or breast/chestfeeding.

How Vaccines Work

Within our bodies, each of us has warrior cells that stand guard and attack diseases. Vaccines help our warrior cells see and fight disease. For example, when we get the flu shot, the ingredients in the shot tell our warrior cells how to recognize and fight the flu. That is why if you get a flu shot, you are less likely to get sick with the flu. Getting vaccinated can also reduce the seriousness of illness if you happen to get sick.

Vaccines Protect You and Baby During Pregnancy

When you get vaccinated during pregnancy and your warrior cells learn to recognize and fight a particular illness, this information gets shared with your unborn baby. However, the protection offered to your baby starts to fade in the weeks and months after birth. That's why it's important to talk with your health provider about what vaccines both you and your newborn need to stay healthy.

Vaccines to Get When You're Pregnant

Several vaccines are recommended for pregnant people. These include:

- Tdap (whooping cough) vaccine
- Flu vaccine
- COVID-19 vaccine

Depending on your history, you and your doctor may decide that you need additional vaccines.

"As a new parent, I know that I'm not only responsible for my health, but for my baby's health too. Making sure our whole family is up to date on our vaccines gives me peace of mind that we are all doing what we can to stay healthy. I also feel like I am honoring our ancestors who did not always have access to these medicines."

– Torrie Eagle Staff, Mnicoujou & Oglala Lakota, Northern Arapaho, and Northern Cheyenne, Project Manager at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board

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Vaccines and Breast/Chestfeeding

Breast/chestfeeding is one of the best ways to nourish, comfort, and connect with your baby. When you are vaccinated, breast/chest feeding can also help you pass on important instructions for recognizing and fighting serious illnesses, like COVID-19. Likewise, getting vaccinated as a new parent makes it less likely that you will get sick and make your baby sick.

Talk with your health provider to learn what specific vaccines are recommended for you while you are breast/chestfeeding.

"One of the most common questions I get asked from many new parents and parents-to-be is whether it is safe to get vaccinated. The short answer is yes! You just need to check in with your health provider."

– Dr. LaKota Scott, ND, Medical Provider and Navajo Nation Tribal Member

The Choice is Yours

As you think about getting vaccinated, read up and bring any questions or concerns you have to your health provider. They can talk with you and help explain why certain vaccines are safe and effective and which vaccines you may want to temporarily avoid. They will also share other tools to keep you and your family healthy.

Where to Get Vaccinated

To get vaccinated contact your local Tribal clinic, IHS facility, or visit a local pharmacy or clinic.

VacciNative

This handout was developed by VacciNative – a campaign dedicated to creating accurate vaccine information for Native people by Native people. We do this by gathering info from trusted Elders, Native health professionals, and other experts.

All of our materials are reviewed by the VacciNative Alliance, a collaboration of staff from Tribal Epidemiology Centers across the nation.

Additional Information

For additional information, check out www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative. For questions, contact us at VacciNative@npaihb.org.

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