

COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy protects babies, research finds

By Annie Oeth, University of Mississippi Medical Center, Communications and Marketing

Infants under 6 months of age whose mothers were vaccinated against COVID-19 have a 61 percent decreased risk of hospitalization from the virus, according to research involving the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

The research, “Effectiveness of Maternal Vaccination with mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine During Pregnancy Against COVID-19–Associated Hospitalization in Infants Aged <6 Months — 17 States, July 2021–January 2022,” was featured recently in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, a publication of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Charlotte Hobbs, professor of pediatric infectious diseases at UMMC, was among the authors of the study, and is UMMC site principal investigator for the Overcoming COVID-19 network, a multi-center CDC-funded network. Hobbs’ research team at UMMC includes family medicine nurse practitioner and clinical lead for Hobbs’ team, Lora Martin, and project manager Lacy Malloch. Dr. April Palmer, chief of pediatric infectious diseases; and Dr.

Roberto Santos, professor of pediatric infectious diseases; were also group authors for this study.

“Participating in this study is exciting because of its findings,” Hobbs said. “We know that infants can suffer from severe disease with COVID, and this study is so important as it shows that mRNA vaccines protect babies of immunized moms from serious illness.”

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky tweeted about the research.

“I’m excited to share new evidence of the protective power of COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant people and their babies,” Walensky said in a video shared on Twitter. “When people receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy, their bodies build antibodies against COVID-19, and these antibodies pass from the mother to the developing baby.”

“We know that COVID-19 illness can have serious effects during pregnancy, and we want both mothers and babies to be protected,” Walensky said. “Those who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to become pregnant or may become pregnant in the future are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated.”

Dr. Anita Henderson, president of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said the research



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shows how COVID-19 vaccination of pregnant mothers can give babies the added boost to their immune systems.

“I have talked with many moms who delivered during the Omicron surge,” she said. “Moms who were vaccinated were thankful because their babies had added protection from maternal antibodies. I have, unfortunately, also recently admitted several babies to the hospital with COVID-19 during the

Omicron surge. Those moms were understandably scared and worried for their babies.”

“This study shows that among infants younger than 6 months hospitalized with COVID-19, 84 percent were born to mothers who were not vaccinated during pregnancy. This research shows how COVID-19 vaccination of pregnant mothers can give babies the best chance for a healthy start in life.”



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