

## DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Understanding Vaccines During Pregnancy

Just like eating nutritious foods and going to your prenatal visits, getting vaccinated is an essential part of a healthy pregnancy. Prepare to talk to your doctor about what vaccines you might need during pregnancy by reviewing some common terms and questions.

## Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

<b>Tdap</b>	A vaccine that protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (also known as whooping cough). Pregnant women should get the Tdap between 27 and 36 weeks of every pregnancy, regardless of how long it's been since they last received it.
<b>Influenza Vaccine</b>	A vaccine to protect against seasonal flu—a virus that is especially dangerous for pregnant women and young infants. Doctors recommend nearly everyone over the age of 6 months get the flu vaccine every flu season, including pregnant women.
<b>Antigen</b>	A foreign organism or substance that activates the body's immune system. Vaccines work by introducing minor antigens into the body.
<b>Antibody</b>	A protein made by the body's immune system to fight specific antigens. Antibodies are key to developing immunity from a disease.
<b>Active Immunity</b>	When the body is able to protect itself from a specific germ because it's already been exposed to it via an infection or through vaccination.
<b>Passive Immunity</b>	Temporary protection from a disease from someone passing on their antibodies, such as during pregnancy or through breastfeeding. Newborns rely on passive immunity to protect themselves from certain diseases until they can be vaccinated.
<b>Contraindication</b>	Instances when a vaccine should not be given. Some vaccines made using live (but weakened) versions of a virus are generally not recommended during pregnancy because of the theoretical risk that the vaccine virus could lead to an infection.
<b>Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS)</b>	A tool for reporting unwanted things that happen after vaccination. Health officials use the data to spot potential risks posed by vaccines that might not have shown up in pre-licensure clinical trials. Anyone can report anything to VAERS, even things that weren't caused by a vaccine. As a result, VAERS reports should never be mistaken for proof that vaccines cause a particular medical issue.
<b>Aluminum Adjuvants</b>	An ingredient used in some vaccines to make them more effective, allowing them to be given in smaller amounts and in fewer doses. Aluminum salts have been used in vaccines for over 70 years and have a strong safety track record.
<b>Thimerosal</b>	A preservative used in some flu and tetanus vaccines to protect against contamination, which contains a non-toxic type of mercury that studies show to be safe. Thimerosal-free versions of vaccines are available for those who prefer them.

