

Uptake of flu, whooping cough, and COVID-19 vaccines remains low among pregnant women

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A study conducted by researchers at the University of Warwick has unveiled crucial insights into the complex factors shaping vaccination decisions among pregnant women, particularly in the wake of the

COVID-19 pandemic.

Pregnant women and their unborn babies face heightened risks of serious illness from [infectious diseases](#) such as Influenza (flu), Pertussis (whooping cough), and COVID-19. The research shows that despite the proven safety and efficacy of vaccinations during pregnancy, uptake remains alarmingly low, presenting a significant public health concern.

Despite the availability of free vaccinations for [pregnant women](#) in the U.K., of those who gave birth in England in October 2021, 29.4% had received two doses of the COVID-19 [vaccine](#), compared to approximately 60.4% of the general population.

The [study](#), titled "What factors influence the uptake of vaccinations amongst pregnant women following the Covid-19 pandemic: A qualitative study," published in *Midwifery*, interviewed pregnant women aged between 19 and 41 exploring their perceptions, experiences, and the factors influencing their decisions regarding vaccinations.

Dr. Jo Parsons from the University of Warwick who led the research said, "This research demonstrates the influence that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on pregnant women's views and uptake of recommended vaccinations and is further evident by the continuing decline in uptake since the pandemic.

"It is essential that pregnant women receive clear and consistent messaging, to allow them to make accurate and informed choices about vaccinating in pregnancy."

The findings are categorized into four main areas, each influencing pregnant women's vaccination decisions:

- Internal factors or beliefs: Including feelings about susceptibility

to illness during pregnancy, perceived immunity, feelings of responsibility for the health and well-being of themselves, their [unborn baby](#) and other people, and fear of vaccinations.

- Vaccination related factors: Including perceived effectiveness, perceived safety, how available or accessible vaccinations were, and the preference to use other strategies of protection.
- External Factors: This included how visible the illness being vaccinated against was felt to be, and how much of the illness was felt to be around at the time.
- COVID-19 specific factors: Including doubts around the newness of the vaccination a

Commenting on the significance of the study, Dr. Jo Parsons said, "This research is vital to learn how pregnant women feel about accepting vaccinations following a [pandemic](#), and how to address low uptake, to protect more pregnant women from largely preventable conditions. This research provides valuable insights and informs future interventions to be developed."

More information: Dr Jo Parsons et al, What factors influence the uptake of vaccinations amongst pregnant women following the Covid-19 pandemic: A qualitative study, *Midwifery* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.midw.2024.104021](#)

Provided by University of Warwick

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