



Vaccine safety for adolescent girls

Many vaccines are not recommended or may be contraindicated during pregnancy. This may pose a challenge for health staff vaccinating adolescent girls who may be pregnant.

Pregnancy testing in minors in order to give vaccines safely raises issues about consent (for testing).

In order to provide safe vaccination as well as proper confidentiality and consent for testing the following steps should be followed.

- Provide all parents/guardians (consenters) and adolescent girls with pre-vaccination checklist information to assess whether they should be vaccinated. An example checklist modified from The Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition 2013 is overleaf.
- Ask the girl before administration of vaccine if she could possibly be pregnant and/or can she tell you when she had her last period. Consider beforehand the appropriate person to discuss this information with the girl.
- If the girl seems uncertain, offer to see her at the clinic at an alternative time. After further discussion you may decide to perform a pregnancy test. Pregnancy testing is not a routine part of vaccination programs. You must ensure that you have the girl's informed consent to carry out pregnancy testing. Consent for pregnancy testing is not covered by the Healthy School Age Kids screening consent form.

Once you are certain that the girl:

- Is not pregnant
- Is fully aware of the risks and benefits of vaccination
- Has no other contraindications
- Or parent/guardian has given consent

then proceed with vaccination.

Adolescents are scheduled to receive the following vaccines as part of the National Immunisation Program. None of these should be given routinely in pregnancy. The following information is provided from The Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition 2013.

Adult diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis vaccine - Boostrix® (dTpa) at 13 years

Routine use of this vaccine in pregnancy is not recommended however Boostrix® (dTpa) vaccine can be given to pregnant girls during the 3rd trimester of pregnancy as an alternative to post-partum vaccination.

Varicella vaccine - Varivax® or Varilrix® (VV) at 13 years

All varicella-containing vaccines are live attenuated viral vaccines and are contraindicated in pregnancy, as the effects on fetal development are unknown. Vaccinees should be advised not to become pregnant for 1 month after vaccination.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine – Gardasil® at 12 years

Although there is no evidence that HPV vaccine causes adverse fetal outcomes the vaccine is not recommended to be given in pregnancy. In the event that a dose of HPV vaccine is given during pregnancy, the completion of the 3 dose course should be delayed until after the delivery.

Pneumococcal vaccine – Pneumovax23® (23vPPV) at 15 years

Although 23vPPV has been administered in pregnancy in the context of clinical trials with no evidence of adverse effects, data are limited. Deferral of vaccination is recommended unless the risk of invasive pneumococcal disease is very high. Further studies may change this recommendation in the future.

Pre-vaccination checklist

This checklist helps your immunisation service provider decide about vaccination today.

Please tell your immunisation service provider if you:

- Are unwell today
- Have a disease which lowers immunity (eg. leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS) or are having treatment which lowers immunity (eg. oral steroid medicines such as cortisone and prednisone, radiotherapy, chemotherapy)
- Have had a severe reaction following any vaccine
- Have any severe allergies (to anything)
- Have had any vaccine in the past month
- Have had an injection of immunoglobulin or received any blood products or a whole blood transfusion within the past year
- Are pregnant
- Have a past history of Guillain-Barré syndrome
- Were a preterm infant
- Have a chronic illness
- Have a bleeding disorder.

A different vaccination schedule may be recommended if you:

- Identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Do not have a functioning spleen
- Are planning a pregnancy or parenthood
- Are a parent or carer of a newborn
- Live with someone who has a disease which lowers immunity (e.g. leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS), or live with someone who is having treatment that lowers immunity (e.g. oral steroid medicines such as cortisone and prednisone, radiotherapy, chemotherapy)
- Are planning travel
- Have work or lifestyle factor(s) for which vaccination may be needed.

Note: Please ask your immunisation service provider questions about this information or any other matter relating to vaccination before the vaccines are given.

Before any vaccination takes place, the immunisation service provider will ask you:

- Did you understand the information provided to you about immunisation?
- Do you need more information to decide whether to proceed?
- Did you bring your vaccination record card with you?

It is important for you to receive a personal record of your injections. If you do not have a record, ask your immunisation service provider to give you one. Bring this record with you every time you visit for vaccination. Make sure your immunisation service provider records all vaccinations on it. You may need this record to enter school or for certain occupations.

Adapted from: The Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition 2013.

Contact your nearest CDC

Darwin	8922 8044
Alice Springs	8951 7549
Nhulunbuy	8987 0357
Tennant Creek	8962 4259
Katherine	8973 9049

Immunise Australia Hotline 1800 671 811

Further publications including fact sheets and treatment protocols are available at: <http://www.nt.gov.au/health/cdc>