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Pregnant, breastfeeding women should get vaccinated as job is safe: Experts

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Pregnant and breastfeeding women should get vaccinated to protect themselves and their babies from Covid-19, as real world data has shown this is not only safe but beneficial to mother and child, specialists here said.

Given the current emergence of new Covid-19 variants and a resurgence of community-transmitted cases, there is reason to vaccinate pregnant women, who are at a higher risk of developing complications from Covid-19 than non-pregnant women.

Vaccination also protects the baby, said the College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Singapore (COGS) and the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Singapore (OGSS) yesterday.

Studies in other countries have shown pregnant women who get Covid-19 are more likely to require intensive care or need invasive ventilation, said Dr Lim Min Yu, president of OGSS. This also puts the baby at a higher risk of pre-term birth and stillbirth, and may also need intensive care.

“It’s for these reasons we feel it is imperative to encourage our pregnant women to be vaccinated,” he said.

Moreover, the antibodies that the women produce after vaccination are transferred to the babies before birth and to the breast milk.

This offers protection to the babies, though the extent and duration of this protection is unclear at this stage, he said.

The vaccines are also safe for women planning to conceive, as well as for breastfeeding mothers, with none of the vaccine components passing into the breast milk, said COGS and OGSS.

COGS and OGSS said a recent study involving about 4,000 women in the US “demonstrated (the) safety of the mRNA Covid-19 vaccines (PfizerBioNTech and Moderna), with no increased risks of adverse pregnancy outcomes, nor any obvious adverse events”.

Dr Lim said that presently, the main published data available on Covid-19 vaccines and pregnancy is on the two mRNA vaccines that are used here, and that there is no safety data to date for the use of the Sinovac inactivated vaccine on pregnant women.

It is not clear why pregnant women are more prone to become severely ill with Covid-19.