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Delta variant increases risks for pregnant women

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Compared to coronavirus cases earlier in the pandemic, infections with the Delta variant lead to worse outcomes for unvaccinated pregnant women, new data suggest.

Doctors studied 1,515 pregnant women with COVID-19 who received care from a large public health system in Dallas from May 2020 through Sept. 4, 2021. Overall, 82 women – 81 of whom were unvaccinated – developed severe illness, including 10 who needed ventilators and two who died.

The proportion of severe or critical cases among pregnant women was around five percent until early 2021, and were “largely nonexistent” in February and most of March 2021, the researchers said in a statement.

In late summer, during the peak of the surge of the Delta variant, the proportion of pregnant COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization jumped to 10 percent to 15 percent, they reported in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Pregnant women face greater risks for complications with any type of severe respiratory infection, so these findings of the higher risk from the Delta variant further emphasize the need for them to get vaccinated for COVID-19, study leader Dr. Emily Adhikari of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center said in a statement.