

## **Memo from Dirk Huyer – Prioritizing Pregnant Individuals for Vaccination**

I am writing to notify that as of April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, all pregnant individuals will be eligible to register for vaccination appointments under the highest risk health conditions in the Phase 2 prioritization guidance.

**Pregnant individuals are eligible to receive their vaccine through Public Health Unit (PHU) immunization clinics by booking an appointment through the provincial call centre at 1-888-999-6488. Pregnant individuals who are in a PHU not using the provincial booking system will be directed to their local PHU to book an appointment.**

Pregnant individuals may choose to receive the vaccine at any time during their pregnancy. However, essential consideration should be made for those in the later stages of their pregnancy.

It is recommended, but not required, that pregnant individuals have discussion with their treating health care provider, or with a health care provider familiar with their pregnancy, that includes:

- (1) a review of the potential risks and benefits of the vaccine,
- (2) a review of the risk of acquiring a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy,
- (3) a review of the potential risks /consequences associated with a COVID-19 infection during pregnancy, and
- (4) an acknowledgment of the limited evidence from clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines in the pregnant population.

Please see the COVID-19 Vaccination Recommendations for Special Populations for further details on COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant individuals.

### **Please Note:**

- A letter from a health care provider is **not** required for vaccination.
- The extended dose interval of 16 weeks remains appropriate for this population.
- The Province's Prioritization Guidance and website will be updated in the coming days to reflect this change in prioritization for pregnant individuals, but implementation can begin immediately.

### **Background**

**An increased number of critically ill pregnant individuals have been observed in Wave 3.** During waves 1 and 2 most pregnant patients with moderate to severe COVID-19 associated disease had a pre-existing comorbidity; however, reports from clinicians indicate in wave 3 younger pregnant individuals with no co-morbidities are developing moderate to severe disease. Recent data from the UK, where the B.1.1.7 variant is dominant, confirm pregnant women with COVID-19 had greater likelihood to require respiratory support.

The province's Vaccine Clinical Advisory Group (VCAG) rapidly convened to review the available data relating to COVID-19 infections in pregnancy. In response to emerging data on the increased risk of severe illness for this population, VCAG recommended the inclusion of pregnant individuals in the highest risk prioritization category allowing current eligibility to book vaccine appointments in Ontario.

This recommendation aligns with a Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (SOGC) request to prioritize pregnant individuals for COVID-19 vaccination, as they currently require intensive care at a rate higher than their non-pregnant cohort. Additionally, ventilator support in pregnancy is challenging, with greater risks to both mother and child. Finally, pregnant individuals with COVID-19 have an increased risk of premature delivery, caesarean delivery, and admissions of their babies to a neonatal unit.

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