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COVID Vaccine Linked to Higher Risk of Life-Threatening Complications During Pregnancy

Women who received a COVID-19 shot either during or right before pregnancy reported significantly higher rates of life-threatening pregnancy-related hypertensive disorders than unvaccinated women, according to a new CDC study. The women in the study had a higher risk, regardless of which COVID-19 vaccine they received or when they received it during pregnancy.

by **Brenda Baletti, Ph.D.**

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Women who received a COVID-19 shot either during or right before pregnancy reported significantly higher rates of life-threatening pregnancy-related hypertensive disorders than unvaccinated women, according to a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **(CDC) registry study**.

Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy (HPD), including gestational hypertension and preeclampsia, are leading causes of illness and death for mothers and fetuses in the U.S.

The peer-reviewed study, published in **Vaccine**, analyzed data from more than 16,000 first-time pregnancies. The researchers found that vaccinated women had a 24% higher risk of HPD.

The women had a higher risk no matter which **COVID-19 vaccine** they received or when they got it during their pregnancy.

'Pregnant women were told these genetic products were safe'

This is the first study to find a statistically significant risk. That significance remained present after the authors adjusted for confounding variables.

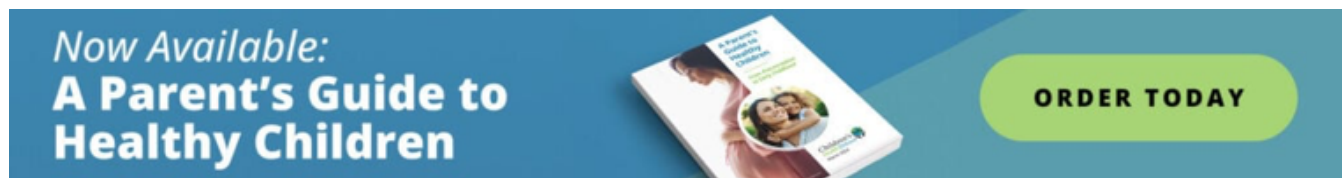
Most of the study authors work at the CDC. They cautioned that their findings do not establish causation. However, they said that the results show that continued safety monitoring and updated risk-benefit analyses must be ongoing.

"Pregnant women were told these genetic products were safe," said epidemiologist **Nicolas Hulscher**. "And now, the CDC itself has identified a statistically significant elevation in one of the most serious obstetric complications. Global accountability for the harm inflicted on mothers and their unborn children is warranted."

Former **CDC Director Rochelle Walensky** began urging pregnant women to get the COVID-19 vaccine in April 2021. She said the shot was safe, even though the CDC also noted that limited data existed on the **safety of the shots during pregnancy**.

The **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists** (ACOG) still advises all pregnant women to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Dr. Mark Turrentine states on ACOG's website that the shots are "completely safe" to use during pregnancy.

A promotional banner for a book titled "A Parent's Guide to Healthy Children". The banner has a blue background on the left and a teal background on the right. On the left, the text "Now Available: A Parent's Guide to Healthy Children" is written in white. In the center, there is a small image of the book cover, which shows a woman holding a child. On the right, there is a green button with the text "ORDER TODAY" in white capital letters.

Comparing vaccinated and unvaccinated pregnancies

The researchers compared vaccinated women enrolled in the CDC's **COVID-19 Vaccine Pregnancy Registry** with unvaccinated women drawn from the CDC's **Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System**.

The participants self-reported their symptoms to the registries.

To reduce bias, researchers paired participants one-to-one. They matched the women by age, race, ethnicity and length of pregnancy at delivery. All participants were first-time mothers who gave birth to one child. The researchers excluded all women with known chronic hypertension.

Fifteen percent of vaccinated women reported HPD, compared with 12% of unvaccinated women. Even after accounting for factors such as body mass index, diabetes, state of residence and year of delivery, vaccinated women remained significantly more likely to report HDP.

The study also found that women who got COVID-19 illness during pregnancy had 28% higher risk of HPD than those who didn't.

In other words, they found that the risk of HPD from **vaccination** is similar to the risk from COVID-19 infection.

This raises serious questions about public health messaging during the pandemic, given that health officials consistently warned pregnant women they were at higher risk from COVID-19 and that the vaccine was safe.

How do vaccines and COVID affect blood pressure?

The authors discussed several biologically plausible mechanisms that could help explain the findings.

One involves the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. This protein interacts with **ACE2 receptors** on the placental cells — the primary receptors for the virus. Those receptors are involved in blood pressure regulation.

Because mRNA vaccines prompt the body to make the spike protein, researchers have observed temporary increases in blood pressure after vaccination in non-pregnant populations.

Another possible cause is immune activation and inflammation from the vaccine, the authors said. Inflammation can disrupt blood flow in the placenta early in pregnancy and cause hypertensive disorders.

Children's Health Defense Senior Research Scientist Karl Jablonowski told **The Defender** that "this is not new **science**." Although the CDC has never published this information before, scientists identified the links between the ACE2 receptors and **hypertension** in 2020.

Researchers also identified the link between **vaccine-induced inflammation** and hypertension before the CDC recommended the shots to pregnant women, he said.

Jablonowski said it was also noteworthy that the CDC is acknowledging safety risks, and also that the paper was published in *Vaccine*, which seldom publishes studies critical of vaccines.

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Authors call for new evaluation of pregnancy risks from COVID and vaccines

The authors noted that the study had some limitations. It relied on self-reported diagnoses. The vaccinated and unvaccinated groups showed differences in timing, jobs and pandemic stress.

Almost half of the vaccinated participants were healthcare workers. This group faced high stress during the pandemic. They may also have different health monitoring and reporting habits compared to the general population.

Their validation analyses showed a strong match between self-reported hypertension and medical records. This held true despite the limitations.

The authors noted that because the vaccinated and unvaccinated groups came from different surveillance systems and different time periods, the findings cannot be considered causal.

The authors concluded with a call for new evaluations of pregnancy risks from COVID-19 illness and vaccination.

The CDC's current stance on COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy is unclear.

Although the agency last year **stopped routinely recommending** the shot, it has yet to issue new guidance.

The CDC website on **vaccination during pregnancy** says "no guidance/not applicable" for COVID-19 vaccines.

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**Brenda Baletti, Ph.D.**

Brenda Baletti, Ph.D., is a senior reporter for The Defender. She wrote and taught about capitalism and politics for 10 years in the writing program at Duke University. She holds a Ph.D. in human geography from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a master's from the University of Texas at Austin.

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"This raises serious questions about public health messaging during the pandemic, given that health officials consistently warned pregnant women they were at higher risk from COVID-19 and that the vaccine was safe."

Public messaging was 100% propaganda. It was 2 years before the CDC admitted that 770 safety signals had triggered. Including death. The CDC suppressed any information that could cause people to reject taking the Covid shot. Pregnant women were Gaslit by the CDC, along with adults and children, down to the age of 6 months.

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