



August 19, 2021

Dear Colleague,

The fourth wave of COVID-19, driven by the Delta variant, is here in Alberta and it could have **devastating effects on unvaccinated pregnant people**. You have been great allies as we attempt to reach and protect every mom and baby in Alberta, so we are asking for your help again.

In mid-July, our reports showed approximately four new cases of COVID-19 in pregnant individuals every week, but these numbers are climbing, with **TWENTY-FIVE (25) new cases per week** reported in pregnant people in Alberta during the second week of August. In the last week alone, at least 14 pregnant individuals needed care in the emergency room and two of them were sent to the ICU.

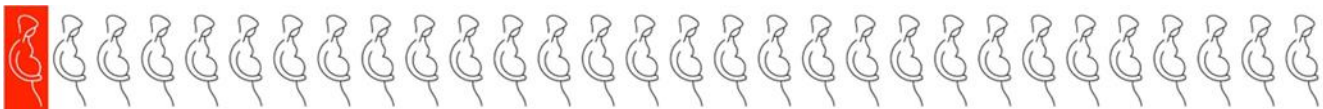
Canadian and International data show us that pregnant individuals with COVID-19 infections are at a higher risk of severe disease and complications, such as ICU admission, requiring ventilation, and preterm birth (Ref: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)). In Alberta, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave, we saw almost 1,000 new COVID-19 cases in pregnancy and 10 pregnant individuals went to ICU. Some new parents acquired COVID-19 soon after birth, and passed the infection to their new born babies, and some of those babies, had to be admitted to the hospital for life-threatening complications. **Each of these events was preventable** because since April, pregnant Albertans have been eligible to get safe and effective COVID-19 mRNA vaccinations.

While it is important for pregnant individuals (vaccinated or unvaccinated) to protect themselves from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases by practicing good hygiene, physical distancing and wearing a mask, **getting vaccinated is critical to protect individuals and babies** from serious infection and the potentially devastating consequences, particularly in the third trimester of pregnancy.

### How can you help?

Albertans between the ages of 20 – 34 have some of the lowest rates of vaccination, making it even more urgent to get the message out that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective during pregnancy. Here are some resources for you to consider to help address vaccine hesitancy among pregnant individuals in your practice.

- The Vaccine Hesitancy Guide ([VH Guide](#)) is a tool designed to help support clinical conversations about vaccines. It differentiates common vaccine hesitancy concerns and provides advice and resources for medical professionals to help address them.
- The [v-safe COVID-19 Vaccine Pregnancy Registry](#) shows that mRNA vaccines are **SAFE and EFFECTIVE during pregnancy**. Data collected on over 140,000 pregnant individuals who have been vaccinated, reassure us that COVID-19 vaccines do not increase the risk of miscarriage or cause birth defects.





- CDC Director Rochelle Walensky issued a statement recently saying “CDC encourages all pregnant people or people who are thinking about becoming pregnant and those breastfeeding to get vaccinated to protect themselves from COVID-19. The vaccines are safe and effective, and it has never been more urgent to increase vaccinations as we face the highly transmissible Delta variant and see severe outcomes from COVID-19 among unvaccinated pregnant people.” ([Washington Post Article](#))
- Dr. Fiona Mattatall, OBGYN, recorded a series of videos with former midwife and lactation consultant Stephanie Elliott to answer questions on COVID-19 vaccines & reproductive health. ([YouTube Pregnancy Series](#)).
- We have created social media channels to help reach pregnant individuals. Please share these links with your expectant, lactating or recently pregnant patients, along with their partners, friends and families: we need to support them and help them find reliable information sources.
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PEMBAnetwork>
  - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PEMBAnetwork>
  - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/pembanetwork/>

Please contact our team with any questions or suggestions at [PEMBAnetwork@ucalgary.ca](mailto:PEMBAnetwork@ucalgary.ca)  
Thank you for all your continuing work to care for Alberta families.

Sincerely,

**Eliana Castillo MD FRCPC MHSc**  
Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine and Obstetrics & Gynaecology  
Clinical Knowledge Lead-Medicine  
Cumming School of Medicine and Alberta Health Services

&

**Dr. Verena Kuret, MD**  
Calgary MFM Section Head  
Maternal Fetal Medicine Specialist and Clinical Assistant Professor  
Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Section of Maternal Fetal Medicine  
University of Calgary, Cumming School of Medicine

on behalf of the CANCOVID-Preg Alberta Team

