

Dr. Tali Bogler, chair of family medicine obstetrics at St. Michael's Hospital, has been advocating for pregnant and breastfeeding health-care workers to be able to make their own decisions.

"It's a step in the right direction," she said. "We know that the risks are high in pregnant people with COVID, so this is also going to be safer," especially as the majority of health-care workers in Canada are women, many of them of child-bearing age.

"To be completely excluded and denied was really a question about people's autonomy, and I think that was really upsetting to so many people," she added.

The [new guidance](#) says that pregnant women "may choose to receive the vaccine after informed counselling and consent." This should include a discussion of the risks and benefits of the vaccine, the risks of COVID in pregnancy and acquiring it, and the lack of evidence of the vaccine in this population. Those with autoimmune conditions or who are immunocompromised should have a similar discussion with their doctor.

People who are breastfeeding should also understand the lack of evidence. As the COVID vaccines that use messenger RNA are not live vaccines, they're not "hypothesized to be a risk to the breastfeeding infant," the memo notes.

A spokesperson for the Minister of Health said in an email their health experts originally advised that pregnant and breastfeeding women not get the vaccine as they were not included in the safety trials, and revised this recommendation "after careful review."

"As always, we will continue to monitor the emerging scientific evidence from clinical trials and from Health Canada approvals," the spokesperson added.

These individuals will not need sign off from their doctors/midwives or nurse practitioners to get the vaccine, but they will need to attest that they've discussed the risks with a care provider.

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Bogler co-founded the [Instagram account](#) Pandemic Pregnancy Guide to provide