



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 11, 2022

Acting Health Secretary and State Physician General Encourage Pregnant Pennsylvanians to Get Vaccinated

Harrisburg, PA – Acting Health Secretary Keara Klinepeter and Physician General Dr. Denise Johnson today strongly urged those who are pregnant or plan to become pregnant to get vaccinated to gain protection from COVID-19.

“Pregnancy is a vulnerable time,” Dr. Johnson said. “The evidence is clear that vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, are safe and effective and do not cause fertility issues in women or men. In fact, COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now or might become pregnant in the future.”

During a news conference at UPMC Harrisburg, Klinepeter announced that she is pregnant, fully vaccinated and received her booster shot after learning she was pregnant. The acting secretary says that she and her husband are expecting a son at the end of June.

“I’m sharing this news publicly, because I want my story to help other women across Pennsylvania make an informed decision,” Acting Secretary Klinepeter said. “I am vaccinated, I am boosted and thanks to scientists, doctors and my great teammates at the Department of Health, I’m confident that it was the right decision.”

Both certified in obstetrics and gynecology, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Chavone Momon-Nelson of UPMC Pinnacle discussed the importance of the decision and urged others to talk to their health care provider should they have concerns. The latest [CDC report](#) provides details on how the vaccines are safe and effective for all persons wishing to become pregnant, or currently pregnant, or breastfeeding. It also notes that COVID-19 vaccines prevent severe maternal morbidity and adverse birth outcomes.

The CDC also found that women with symptomatic COVID-19 during pregnancy have a more than twofold increased risk for intensive care unit admission, invasive ventilation, and a 70 percent increased risk for death, compared with nonpregnant women with symptomatic infections.

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been following the science, guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and letting that information guide our decision making,” Dr. Johnson continued. “Even with this concrete data on the COVID-19 vaccine and pregnancy, we know that the virus is continually evolving. That is why the monitoring of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy is ongoing.”

The Department of Health recommends pregnant Pennsylvanians get fully vaccinated and boosted as soon as possible and use the CDC’s v-safe pregnancy registry, which is

a smartphone-based tool that offers personalized health check-ins. The app also gathers information from people who received their COVID-19 shot prior to or during pregnancy, which could be critical to healthcare providers and other pregnant persons who are attempting to get educated and make informed decisions about vaccination.

MEDIA CONTACT: Mark O'Neill, ra-dhpressoffice@pa.gov

###