

PREGNANT WOMEN

Introduction

This document presents summary findings for pregnant women across Wales, indicating where there are differences and particularities compared to overall results. There is a separate report showing results across groups. The title of the overall report is: 'Evaluation of information resources' (produced by BMG Research on behalf of PHW). Five pregnant women took part in the quantitative survey and six pregnant women took part in a qualitative focus group. Fieldwork took place between December 2022 and February 2023. The number of pregnant women who took part in the quantitative survey is too low and therefore survey results for pregnant women cannot be reported. This document focuses instead on presenting the findings from the qualitative focus group with pregnant women. Further information about sampling and methodology can be found on the main report cited above.

Recommendations and key take outs for this group are marked in **bold**.

Awareness of publicity about immunisation

Some pregnant women who had taken part in the focus group recalled having seen information about the flu vaccine at their GP surgery, mostly adverts promoting the flu vaccine for pregnant people and other vulnerable groups:

"An advert at the GP saying flu is very prevalent at the moment and that they're extending the clinics for people to have flu vaccinations". Pregnant woman

"A banner at the GP for flu vaccines for older, vulnerable and pregnant people". Pregnant woman

Apart from this, most participants mentioned that they have encountered misinformation about vaccinations on social media. This information, however, was labelled as 'click bait' and participants say that it wouldn't affect their decision to get vaccinated:

"Conspiracy posts on social media. For example: 'COVID vaccine related death'. I just ignore it. I don't give it any time at all. It's just click bait". Pregnant woman

"I've seen a lot on TikTok recently. I think it's from Americans, about the autism-MMR link [...] it wouldn't put me off getting my child vaccinated though". Pregnant woman

Key take outs:

- **Recommended channels for reaching out to pregnant women: GP surgeries, social media**
- **Most pregnant women say that they encounter misinformation about vaccinations on social media without actively looking for this. It is important for PHW to have an active presence on social media so that pregnant women have access to balanced and objective information about vaccinations on these platforms.**
- **Because most pregnant women had encountered misinformation about vaccinations, this group is more likely than other groups to need 'myth-busting' style information resources.**

Awareness of vaccination programme

Awareness of the vaccinations available in Wales for pregnant women was high, with participants able to name the whooping cough vaccine, the flu vaccine and COVID-19 boosters. However, awareness of other vaccinations of the national vaccination programme in Wales was lower: most

participants are aware that other vaccinations are available for babies, children, teenagers etc but they couldn't mention each individual vaccine.

Key take out:

- **While awareness of pregnancy vaccinations is high among pregnant women, awareness of the wider national vaccination programme in Wales could improve among this group.**

Attitudes towards vaccinations

Attitudes towards vaccinations among pregnant women are positive, with most saying that they trust healthcare professionals and that they see vaccinations as valuable for protecting their unborn babies and themselves.

"If it's something that can help protect my unborn child, then I'm absolutely thrilled. I took them [vaccines]. We're very lucky to get them offered". Pregnant woman

"I would take anything that was recommended by the health[care] professionals". Pregnant woman

However, there was some scepticism among pregnant women in relation to the safety of vaccines for themselves and unborn babies, with bad publicity surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine fuelling this scepticism about vaccinations.

"I think I'm slightly more sceptical since COVID that we don't have all the information and you don't know what you don't know but I think I've got enough information to make a decision". Pregnant woman

"With whooping cough, COVID and flu; the nurse was saying 'you should really get it' but when I was asking why, I feel the nurse didn't have the answers and I was being pushed to the NHS website. Since COVID I'm more sceptical about it so I'm questioning it a lot more than I would have previously [...] At that point I felt there was not enough information for me to go by so I had to go out and do my own research. I wanted to know the importance of having the flu vaccine and how it affects the baby". Pregnant woman

Key take out:

- **While attitudes towards vaccinations are mostly positive among pregnant women, there was some scepticism, particularly since the COVID-19 vaccine became available. This suggests that information resources for this group should focus on highlighting the benefits of vaccination and addressing concerns about vaccine safety/side effects for pregnant women and their unborn babies.**

Access to information and decision-making

Most pregnant women agree that they know where to find information about vaccinations to make informed decisions, with the NHS website being considered the most trustworthy source of information among this group.

"The NHS Wales website [...] it's credible. The maternity staff is different from England. It matches up with the information that you're given by your GP and your midwife. Sometimes it can be dramatised if you go on different websites and you don't know the source where it's come from". Pregnant woman

"The NHS website is quite detailed so you have everything you want to know or need to know and that's very important [...] There's lots of links to other things as well". Pregnant woman

"I tend to go to the NHS website. There are probably other good ones but I think, if I go to the NHS website, I won't get anything wrong". Pregnant woman

Healthcare professionals, such as nurses and midwives, are also trusted sources of information about vaccination among pregnant women:

"The information is always there and if there are any bits that are missing, the nurse that's there before you have it, you'd ask them". Pregnant woman

While most pregnant women say that they make automatic decisions to have the vaccinations they are offered while pregnant; a minority say that they do their own research before making a decision, particularly when it comes to the COVID-19 vaccine and boosters:

"It's not something I would ever consider not having." Pregnant woman

"I generally have them [straightaway]. Possibly with the COVID one, I did more reading about that because it was a new one. Otherwise, any other vaccines that have been around for a while I just have them, I don't question it". Pregnant woman

"I tend to have them all. Obviously, I had some concerns about the COVID vaccine because it was brand new but the other ones it was absolutely fine". Pregnant woman

Key take outs:

- **While most pregnant women felt that they had all the information they needed to make an informed decision on whether or not to get vaccinated, a minority were left with some doubts about vaccine safety even after checking the NHS website and talking to healthcare professionals. Therefore, information resources for pregnant women should emphasise the safety of vaccines for themselves, pregnancy outcomes and their unborn babies.**

Vaccine uptake, barriers and motivations

Uptake of pregnancy vaccinations among pregnant women is high, with most participants saying that they have had all the vaccines they have been offered while pregnant, with protection of themselves and their unborn babies being the main motivations to get vaccinated (see access to information and decision-making section).

However, a minority claimed to have delayed COVID-19 boosters and the flu vaccine due to concerns about side effects for themselves and/or their unborn babies (see attitudes towards vaccinations section).

Key take out:

- **Claimed vaccine uptake among pregnant women is high, with protection of oneself and unborn babies being the most prominent motivations to get vaccinated. Information resources for this group should therefore draw on protection as a motivator to encourage vaccination uptake/draw attention to information resources.**

Key take out:

- **A minority of pregnant women had delayed COVID-19 and flu vaccines due to concerns about safety and side effects. Information resources for this group should focus on explaining why vaccines are safe for pregnant women and unborn babies.**

Awareness and views of PHW publicity

Awareness of PHW publicity among pregnant women is low, with all of the pregnant women who took part in the focus groups saying that they could not recall any of the PHW materials they were shown. Nonetheless, there was agreement that the publicity materials that pregnant women were shown at the focus group appear to be trustworthy given the NHS logo at the front.

In spite of the low levels of awareness, pregnant women were able to identify themselves as the target audiences of the materials, thanks to the use of imagery and text.

"It feels relevant to pregnant people [...] because of the image". Pregnant woman [Protect you and your baby pregnancy leaflet]

"I like it says to protect you and your baby. If you're ill or you can't eat properly, that's going to affect your baby". Pregnant woman [Protect you and your baby pregnancy leaflet]

Apart from images that allow for identification as the target audience of information resources, pregnant women also had a preference for images that conveyed knowledge about illnesses or side effects.

"I find the images, when it shows you what certain things and rashes look like, I find that really useful. That would make me more likely to pick up a leaflet than just an image of a baby". Pregnant woman [Vaccines for babies and children leaflet]

Moreover, as seen with other groups, pregnant women had a preference for short and concise resources, with links and QR codes to further information if desired.

"It's too wordy I think". Pregnant woman [Vaccines for babies and children leaflet]

"There's a lot of information in there that could be whittled down and directed to a website rather than a long-printed leaflet". Pregnant woman [Protect you and your baby pregnancy leaflet]

In terms of format, there was a general preference for digital information resources and less of a preference for paper-based resources.

"If that information could be put in a video that'd be helpful". Pregnant woman [Vaccines for babies and children leaflet]

"I wouldn't bother with leaflets for pregnant women. I understand for people of a certain age but most women of child bearing age will have access to the internet and to smartphones".
Pregnant woman

For a minority, it is important that information resources about vaccines contain detailed information about side effects:

"What are normal side effects and nothing to worry about and when to actually contact a healthcare professional". Pregnant woman

Key take outs:

- **As for other groups, information resources for pregnant women should clearly indicate the target audience.**
- **As with other groups, information resources for pregnant women should include information about potential side effects of vaccinations.**
- **Information resources for pregnant women should be short and concise (as for other groups).**
- **Information resources for pregnant women should be digitally led, with most of the information being laid out on a website and leaflets/physical adverts being mostly used to signpost pregnant women to websites to find out more.**