

BROADCAST-Percentage of pregnant women vaccinated against COVID-19 ‘alarmingly low’
Impact starting to show in hospital ICUs

As the delta variant becomes more common, Peoria, Illinois-based OSF HealthCare frontline doctors are seeing more and more cases of pregnant women admitted to the hospital because they’re infected with the virus.

“I am scared to death we are going to start losing pregnant women from COVID.” (:09)

That’s Dr. Michael Leonardi, an OBGYN and specialist in Maternal-Fetal Medicine for OSF.

Leonardi is worried about what he’s starting to see in OSF HealthCare hospitals.

“We’ve had several pregnant women in our ICUs, we’ve had several pregnant women on ventilators because of COVID, and pregnant women having to be delivered prematurely because of COVID – more than one. Last weekend, when I was on call and rounding, one-third of labor and delivery beds were taken up by women with COVID who had no reason other than COVID to be in the hospital.” (:22)

OSF HealthCare leaders say pregnant women in the care of its physicians are at or slightly below the approximately 25% of women nationwide who are partially or fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Dr. Leonardi stresses pregnancy puts women at high risk for complications from the virus.

“Pregnant women who get infected with COVID are three or four times more likely to end up in an intensive care unit, several times more likely to end up on a ventilator, and a couple times more likely to die than the exact same person who is not pregnant.” (:18)

The Chicago Tribune reports that at one point last week, only one ICU bed was available across all 22 hospitals in southern Illinois. Meanwhile, Dr. Leonardi wants pregnant women to know there is no evidence about [any impact on fertility](#) or increased risk for birth defects or miscarriage from the COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Leonardi urges pregnant women to consider evidence that being pregnant and getting COVID-19 can have dire long-term effects.

“Even though it’s scary (to get vaccinated against the virus), the thought of a pregnant lady dying from COVID or the thought of a pregnant lady having to be delivered months early and then her child having complications for its whole life – that’s scarier to me.” (:15)

A recent study suggests if their mother gets vaccinated, babies can get immunity either in the womb or through breastmilk.

“The mom who has been vaccinated against COVID has antibodies against COVID in her breast milk that help protect her baby from getting COVID in the community.” (:10)

Lastly, Dr. Leonardi stresses that it can take between five to six weeks to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and if women wait to see if cases continue to climb in their community, it could be too late to become fully protected against a highly contagious and potentially life-threatening virus.

