

Pregnant women who were hospitalized with COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa died at higher rates and had more complications than non-pregnant women with similarly severe COVID-19, as well as pregnant women without the disease, according to a study in six African nations.

[The study](#) — the largest of its kind looking at this issue in sub-Saharan Africa — examined the outcomes of 1,315 hospitalized patients in 22 health facilities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda between March 2020 and March 2021.

It analyzed records of pregnant women with and without COVID-19, as well as nonpregnant women with the disease.

Women with COVID-19 who were pregnant had 2.4 times higher risk of needing intensive care and a two times higher risk of death compared with other women with the disease who weren't with children.

“Hearing about those moms who came in distress, died and lost their baby from COVID ... [is] just heartbreaking when you think that could have been prevented.” — Jean Nachega, associate professor, University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health

The researchers didn't see statistical differences among the outcomes in the six countries, lead author Jean Nachega said.

Pregnancy itself is an immunocompromising condition, he said. This is why, for example, pregnant women especially need flu vaccines, because they are at a higher risk of complications.

“Pregnancy itself causes them to be vulnerable,” Nachega said.

And among those who were pregnant, women with COVID-19 had a five times increased risk of death as compared to those without the disease.” VOA (US) reports, “Researchers argue that vaccinating pregnant women against the coronavirus should be made a priority across the region, where most countries do not yet recommend vaccination during pregnancy.”

The study also examined issues relevant to comorbidities in the sub-Saharan Africa context.

The researchers found that pregnant and nonpregnant women with both COVID-19

and HIV or prior cases of tuberculosis had a nearly two fold increase of needing intensive care compared to those without.