

Pregnant Women and the Flu

This 2009–2010 influenza season, there are two different types of flu to avoid— 2009 H1N1 (“swine flu”) and seasonal flu. If you are pregnant, the flu can be very serious for both you and your baby. Some pregnant women sick with H1N1 flu have had early labor and severe pneumonia. Some have been hospitalized and some have died.

Signs and symptoms of the flu. Symptoms include fever (100°F or higher), cough, or sore throat. Other symptoms include runny nose, body aches, chills, headache, fatigue, and occasionally diarrhea and vomiting.

The best way to prevent the flu. Get vaccinated for both H1N1 flu and seasonal flu. Both flu shots are safe. Both protect your newborn from getting the flu. Babies younger than 6 months old cannot get the flu shot.

If you think you have the flu. If you have flu symptoms, take it very seriously. Contact your pregnancy care provider immediately so that flu medications can be started and further instructions given by your provider. If you have a fever, you should begin taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®) right away and follow instructions from your pregnancy care provider.

Go immediately to the emergency room if you have any of these signs:

- You have difficulty breathing.
- You have pressure or pain in your chest, other than pain when you cough.
- You are unable to keep liquids down.
- You were recovering from the flu and are now sicker.
- Others think you are becoming confused or less alert.
- You are dizzy when standing.

If you come in close contact with someone who has the flu. Contact your pregnancy care provider right away. You may need medicine to reduce your chances of getting the flu.

How to prevent getting sick. Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand rub. Avoid touching your nose, mouth, or eyes. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or sneeze into your sleeve. Throw the tissue in the trash. Stay away from sick people. Have a plan for someone else to take care of a sick family member.

Additional information and updates regarding pregnant women and the flu are available at:

ACOG

http://www.acog.org/departments/dept_notice.cfm?recno=20&bulletin=4866

CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pregnancy>

AMA

www.amah1n1info.org

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The American Medical Association



The American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists



Safety of Flu Vaccines

Some pregnant women are concerned about the safety of the 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu vaccines. Both flu vaccines are safe. Vaccination is one of the most important things that you can do for yourself and your baby. Vaccination is safe for you and your baby. Both shots protect your baby from getting the flu. Your baby cannot get the flu shot until 6 months of age. The seasonal flu vaccine has been given safely to millions of pregnant women over the past 45 years. Flu shots have not been shown to cause harm to pregnant women or their babies. The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is made the same way as the seasonal flu vaccine. The type of mercury used in some vaccines has not been shown to be harmful to a pregnant woman or her unborn baby. Mercury has not been found to cause autism. However, if you are still concerned, there is an H1N1 shot without mercury [may or may not be available in your area]. The risk for a pregnant woman and her unborn baby of getting sick with the flu is far greater than being vaccinated.

If you did not get the flu vaccines during pregnancy, you should still get them even if you are breastfeeding. This will help prevent you and your baby from getting the flu.

Who Should Not Be Vaccinated

There are some people who should not get any flu vaccine without first consulting a physician. These people include

- people who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- people who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.
- people who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.
- children younger than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for this age group).
- people who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated).