

Pregnant? You Need a **Flu Shot!**



Information for pregnant woman



Because you are pregnant CDC and your ob-gyn or midwife recommend you get a flu shot to protect yourself and your baby from flu.

You should get vaccinated by the end of October, if possible. This timing can help ensure that you are protected before flu activity begins to increase. Talk to your ob-gyn or midwife about getting a flu shot.

Flu can be a serious illness, especially when you are pregnant.

Getting flu can cause serious problems when you are pregnant. Even if you are generally healthy, changes in immune, heart, and lung functions during pregnancy make you more likely to get severely ill from flu. Pregnant women (and women up to two weeks postpartum) who get flu are at high risk of developing serious illness, including being hospitalized.

Flu shots are the best available protection for you – and your baby.

When you get your flu shot, your body starts to make antibodies that help protect you against flu. Antibodies are also passed on to your developing baby, and help protect them for several months after birth. This is important because babies younger than 6 months old are too young to get a flu vaccine. If you breastfeed your infant, antibodies also can be passed through breast milk. It takes about two weeks for your body to make antibodies after getting a flu vaccine. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or clinic about getting vaccinated by the end of October.

Flu shots are safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

You can get a flu shot at any time, during any trimester, while you are pregnant. Millions of pregnant women have gotten flu shots. Flu shots have a good safety record. There is a lot of evidence that flu vaccines can be given safely during pregnancy, though these data are limited for the first trimester.

If you deliver your baby before getting your flu shot, you should still get vaccinated. Flu is spread from person to person. You, or others who care for your baby, may get sick with flu, and spread it to your baby. It is important that everyone who cares for your baby get a flu vaccine, including other household members, relatives, and babysitters.

Common side effects of a flu vaccine are mild.

After getting your flu shot, you may experience some mild side effects. The most common side effects include soreness, tenderness, redness and/or swelling where the shot was given. Sometimes you might have a headache, muscle aches, fever, and nausea or feel tired. The flu is a serious illness, especially when you are pregnant.



If you have flu symptoms, call your doctor immediately.

If you get flu symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, body aches headache, etc.) – even if you have already had a flu shot – call your doctor, nurse, or clinic right away. Doctors can prescribe influenza antiviral medicine to treat flu. Antiviral drugs can shorten your flu illness, make it milder and lessen the chance of developing serious complications. Because pregnant women are at high risk of developing serious flu complications, CDC recommends that they be treated quickly with antiviral drugs if they get flu symptoms. Oral oseltamivir is the preferred treatment for pregnant women because it has the most data available to suggest that it is safe and beneficial. These medicines work best when started early.

Fever is often a symptom of flu. Having a fever early in pregnancy increases the chances of having a baby with birth defects or other problems. Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or brand store equivalent) can reduce a fever, but you should still call your doctor or nurse and tell them about your illness.

If you have any of the following signs, call 911 and seek emergency medical care right away:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Persistent dizziness, or confusion, or drowsiness.
- Severe or constant vomiting
 - Seizures
 - Not urinating
 - Severe muscle pain
 - Severe weakness or unsteadiness
 - Fever or cough that improves, but then returns or worsens
- Decreased or no movement of your baby
- High fever that is not responding to Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or brand store equivalent).



For more information about the flu or the vaccine, call: **1-800-CDC-INFO** or visit: www.cdc.gov/flu/



**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**
Centers for Disease
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