

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



Information for pregnant women



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

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

The flu is a serious illness, especially when you are pregnant.

Getting the 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 the flu. Pregnant women who get the flu are at higher risk of hospitalization, and even death, than non-pregnant women. Severe illness during your pregnancy can also be dangerous to your developing baby because it increases the chance for significant problems, such as premature labor and delivery.

The flu shot is the best protection for you—and your baby.

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

The flu shot is safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women and their infants.

You can get the flu shot at any time, during any trimester, while you are pregnant. Millions of pregnant women have gotten a flu shot. Flu shots have not been shown to cause harm to pregnant women or their developing babies.

If you have your baby before getting your flu shot, you still need to get vaccinated. The flu is spread from person to person. You, or others who care for your baby, may get the flu, and pass it to the baby. Because babies younger than 6 months are too young to receive the vaccine, it is important that everyone who cares for your baby get a flu vaccine, including other household members, relatives, and babysitters.

The 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.



If you have symptoms of the flu, call your doctor immediately.

If you have flu-like 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 antiviral medicine to treat the flu and lessen the chance of serious illness. Because pregnant women are at high risk of serious flu complications, CDC recommends that they be treated quickly with antiviral drugs if they get flu symptoms. Tamiflu® (oral oseltamivir) is the preferred treatment for pregnant women because it has the most studies 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. Tylenol® (acetaminophen) 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:

- Problems breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness or confusion
- Severe or constant vomiting
- Decreased or no movement of your baby
- High fever that is not responding to Tylenol® or other acetaminophen

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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