

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



## Information for Pregnant Women



**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. 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 sick with flu can cause serious problems when you are pregnant. Even if you are generally healthy, changes in the immune system, heart, and lungs during pregnancy make you more likely to get severely ill from flu. Pregnant women 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.***

Getting a flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against flu. Pregnant women should get a flu shot and not the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), also known as nasal spray flu vaccine. When you get your flu shot, your body starts to make antibodies that help protect you against flu. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against flu to develop in the body. In addition to protecting you, a flu shot given during pregnancy has been shown to help protect your baby from flu infection for several months after birth, when they are too young to get vaccinated. If you breastfeed your infant, antibodies also can be passed through breast milk. You should get a flu vaccine by the end of October. However as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue throughout the flu season, even in January or later.

If you have additional questions, talk to your doctor or health care provider about flu vaccination during pregnancy.

### ***Flu shots have a long safety record.***

Flu shots are recommended at any time, during any trimester, while you are pregnant. Millions of flu vaccines have been given for decades, including to pregnant women, with 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 still need to 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 and may 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 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 illness, make it milder and lessen the chance of developing serious complications. Because pregnant women are at high risk of serious flu complications, CDC recommends that they be treated quickly with flu antiviral drugs if they get flu symptoms. Oseltamivir (generic or brand name Tamiflu®) is the preferred treatment for pregnant women because it has the most studies available to suggest that it is safe and beneficial. Flu antiviral medications 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 (brand name Tylenol®) 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
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness or confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- High fever that is not responding to Tylenol® (or store brand acetaminophen equivalent)
- Decreased or no movement of your baby

For more information about the flu or the vaccine, call:

**1-800-CDC-INFO**

or visit:

**[www.cdc.gov/flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/)**



**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**  
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