



The American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists
WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE PHYSICIANS

Flu Shot for Pregnant Patients: Frequently Asked Questions

I am pregnant. Is it recommended to receive the inactivated influenza vaccine (flu shot)?

Yes. Flu shots are an effective and safe way to protect you and your baby from serious illness and complications of the flu. The flu shot given during pregnancy helps protect infants younger than 6 months who are too young to be vaccinated and have no other way of receiving influenza antibodies. The flu shot has been given to millions of pregnant women over many years, and flu shots have been shown to be safe for pregnant women and their babies.

During which trimester is it safe to have a flu shot?

The flu shot is recommended for pregnant women and can be given at any time during pregnancy. Pregnant women are advised to get vaccinated as soon as possible and to speak to their health care providers about being immunized.

Which flu vaccine should pregnant women receive?

Pregnant women should receive the flu shot, which is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (the College) recommend that pregnant women should receive this vaccine.

Will the flu shot give me the flu?

No, you cannot get the flu from receiving the flu vaccine.

Is there a flu vaccine that pregnant women should not receive?

Yes. Pregnant women should not receive the nasal spray vaccine, which is made with the live flu virus. The nasal spray vaccine is safe for women after they have given birth, even if they are breastfeeding, and for family members.

Are preservatives in influenza vaccines safe for my baby?

Yes. The type of preservative (eg, thimerosal) used in trace amounts in some vaccines has not been shown to be harmful to a pregnant woman or her baby. Some women may be concerned about exposure to preservatives during pregnancy. Single-dose influenza vaccines that contain a mercury-free preservative are available through some manufacturers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the College recommend that pregnant women may receive the inactivated influenza vaccine with or without thimerosal.

(see reverse)

What else can I do to protect my baby against the flu?

Getting your flu shot is the most important step in protecting yourself and your baby against the flu. In addition, breastfeeding your baby and making sure other family members and caregivers receive the flu vaccine will further protect your baby.

I am breastfeeding my baby. Is it safe to get vaccinated?

Yes. Influenza vaccines can be given to breastfeeding mothers if they were not immunized when they were pregnant. Breastfeeding women can receive either the flu shot or the nasal spray. Breastfeeding mothers pass antibodies through breast milk, which may also reduce the infant's chances of getting sick with the flu.

RESOURCES

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Immunization for women: seasonal influenza (flu) for ob-gyns. Available at: http://www.immunizationforwomen.org/immunization_facts/seasonal_influenza. Retrieved November 9, 2011.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Seasonal influenza: pregnant women and influenza (flu). Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>. Retrieved November 9, 2011.

Department of Health and Human Services. What pregnant women should know about flu. Available at: <http://www.flu.gov/individualfamily/parents/pregnant/index.html>. Retrieved November 9, 2011.