

## Pregnant? Protect Your Baby and Yourself - Get a Flu Shot

**Y**our mood can change on a dime. Your feet are swollen, you have heartburn, you can't sleep, and you can't stay away from the bathroom for longer than fifteen minutes. A lot of discomforts come with the joy of pregnancy. Adding flu to that could be overwhelming, or much worse. Pregnant women who get the flu are at risk to have serious illness that could harm them or their unborn child. But one step can protect against flu: a flu vaccine.

The risk from flu is greater for pregnant women because pregnancy can reduce the ability of lungs and the immune system to work normally. This can be bad for both you and your baby.

Although pregnant women are about 1% of the U.S. population, they made up 5% of U.S. deaths from 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) from April 14 - August 21, 2009. According to a study done during the first month of the outbreak, the rate of hospitalizations for 2009 H1N1 was four times higher in pregnant women than other groups.

While CDC is recommending that everyone get vaccinated against the flu this season, the agency has a special message for pregnant women: "Please don't pass up this chance to protect yourself and your baby against the flu," says Dr. Anne Schuchat, Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service and CDC's Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

"Getting a flu vaccine during pregnancy can reduce the risk of getting the flu while pregnant and after," says Dr. Schuchat. "And babies younger than six months can get very sick from flu, but are too young to get vaccinated. The best way to protect them is to have their caregivers and close contacts vaccinated."

"Pregnant women should get flu shots, not the nasal spray vaccine," says Dr. Schuchat. "The flu shot is given in a single dose, and is safe, effective, and cannot cause the flu." Schuchat adds that the vaccine can be safely given in all nine months of pregnancy, and is also safe for breastfeeding mothers. Breastfeeding mothers can get either the nasal spray vaccine or flu shot.

Seasonal flu shots have been given safely to millions of pregnant women over many years. As in previous years, vaccine companies are making plenty of preservative-free flu vaccine as an option for pregnant women and small children. The flu shot (not the nasal spray) is safe for pregnant women during any trimester. Nursing mothers can receive a flu shot or the nasal spray. One shot will last all flu season, even if you get it early in the season.

Usually worse than the common cold, the flu can cause fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and weakness. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. If you think you may have the flu, it's important to call your doctor or nurse right away.

### **Protect yourself. Protect your family. Prevent the flu.**

For more information about the flu or flu vaccine, visit [www.scdhec.gov/flu](http://www.scdhec.gov/flu). You can also talk to your healthcare provider or contact CDC at **1-800-CDC-INFO** or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

[www.scdhec.gov/flu](http://www.scdhec.gov/flu)  
800.868.0404



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