



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

Frequently Asked Questions for Patients Concerning Influenza (Flu) Vaccination During Pregnancy

I am pregnant. Should I get the influenza vaccine (flu shot)?

Yes. Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect you and your baby from serious illness from the flu. Pregnant women and their fetuses have a higher risk of serious complications from the flu. The flu shot given during pregnancy protects women and their newborns. You need a flu shot each year because the flu viruses targeted by the vaccine can change from year to year. The flu shot has been safely given to millions of pregnant women for many years.

How does my flu shot protect my newborn?

When you get a flu shot, your body makes antibodies that also pass to your fetus. This means your baby has protection against the flu after birth. This is important because infants less than 6 months of age are too young to get the flu shot.

Why is it important for pregnant women to get the flu shot?

The flu is a mild-to-severe illness that also often includes fever, body aches, sore throat, cough, and fatigue. Pregnant women who get the flu can become much sicker than women who get the flu when they are not pregnant. Pregnant women who get the flu have a higher chance of the flu turning into pneumonia than women who are not pregnant. Pneumonia is a serious infection in the lungs that usually requires treatment in the hospital. Pregnant women who get the flu often need more medical visits and frequently need to be admitted to the hospital for observation and treatment.

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

The flu shot can be safely given during any trimester. Pregnant women can get the flu shot at any point during the flu season (typically October through May). Pregnant women should get the shot as soon as possible when it becomes available. If you are pregnant, talk with your obstetrician-gynecologist (ob-gyn) or other health care provider about getting the flu shot.

Which flu vaccine should pregnant women get?

Pregnant women should receive any licensed, recommended, age-appropriate inactivated flu vaccine. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists do not recommend one type of flu shot over another.

Will the flu shot give me the flu?

No. You cannot get the flu from getting the flu shot.

I got the flu shot, so why did I still get sick?

The flu shot does not protect against all strains of the flu virus. Experts do their best to determine the virus strains that are most likely to cause illness the following season. Sometimes additional strains end up causing illness. After your flu shot, it takes about 2 weeks for your body to develop antibodies, which are what protects you from the flu. So, if you are exposed to the flu during the time immediately after your flu shot, you can still get the flu. That is why it is important to get the flu shot before flu season becomes very active. The flu shot does not protect against the common cold or other respiratory viruses. During the flu season, you can still get a respiratory illness that is not the flu, even though you got a flu shot.

What are the side effects of the flu shot?

Low-grade fevers, headaches, and muscle aches can occur as temporary (1-2 days) side effects in some people after getting the flu shot. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these risks are outweighed by the risks of the flu, which is a serious illness that can make you or your baby seriously ill for much longer.

(see reverse)

I did not get my Tdap shot during pregnancy. Do I still need to get the vaccine?

If you have never had the Tdap vaccine as an adult, and you do not get the shot during pregnancy, be sure to get the vaccine right after you give birth, before you leave the hospital or birthing center. It will take about 2 weeks for your body to make protective antibodies in response to the vaccine. Once these antibodies are made, you are less likely to give pertussis to your baby. But remember, your newborn still will be at risk of catching pertussis from others. If you received a Tdap vaccination as an adolescent or adult but did not receive one during your pregnancy, you do not need to receive the vaccination after giving birth.

I got a Tdap shot during a past pregnancy. Do I need to get the shot again during this pregnancy?

Yes. All pregnant women should get a Tdap shot during each pregnancy, preferably between 27 weeks and 36 weeks of gestation. Receiving the vaccine as early as possible in the 27–36-weeks-of-gestation window is best. This is important to make sure that each newborn receives the highest possible protection against pertussis at birth.

I received a Tdap shot early in this pregnancy, before 27–36 weeks of gestation. Do I need to get another Tdap shot between 27 weeks and 36 weeks of gestation?

No. A Tdap shot later in the same pregnancy is not necessary if you received the Tdap shot before the 27th week of your current pregnancy.

Can I get the Tdap shot and influenza shot at the same time?

Yes. You can get these two shots, Tdap and influenza, in the same visit. Receiving these vaccinations at the same time is safe.

What is the difference between DTaP, Tdap, and Td?

Children receive the diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine. Adolescents and adults are given the Tdap vaccine as a booster to the vaccines they had as children. Adults receive the tetanus and diphtheria (Td) vaccine every 10 years to protect against tetanus and diphtheria. The Td vaccine does not protect against pertussis.

RESOURCES

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
www.acog.org

Immunization for Women
www.immunizationforwomen.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/pertussis/index.html>

Society for Maternal–Fetal Medicine
www.smfm.org

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