

Vaccines & Pregnancy



Frequently Asked Questions - Vaccine Safety

How does getting vaccinated during pregnancy protect my baby?

Vaccines cause your body to make protective antibodies against the disease you are being vaccinated for. Newborns cannot get many vaccines until they are 2-6 months old. Some of the antibodies from the vaccines that you get when you are pregnant are passed to your baby before birth. This helps protect your baby from illness during the first months of life.

How do I know what vaccines I need?

Discuss the vaccines that you have had with your provider. They will recommend the vaccines you need based on your medical history and lifestyle. If you do not get the recommended vaccines when you are pregnant, talk to your provider about vaccines you can get right after the baby is born.

Are vaccines safe for me and my baby?

Vaccination is one of the most important things that you can do to protect your health and your baby's health. Vaccines help protect you and your baby from many life-threatening diseases. Most vaccines are safe

for you and your baby to get during pregnancy. For example, flu shots have been given safely to millions of pregnant women for more than 50 years. Vaccines made with live-attenuated viruses should not be given during pregnancy. These include the nasal spray flu vaccine, the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine and the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine.

I have heard that some vaccines have mercury in them. Is it safe to get these vaccines during pregnancy?

Thimerosal, a type of mercury, has been removed from most vaccines that you can get in the United States. It is only present in trace amounts in certain versions of the flu vaccine. It has not been shown to be harmful to pregnant women or unborn babies. It does not cause autism. The benefits of preventing life-threatening illnesses in a mother and child far outweigh any potential risks of the vaccine.

Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine(s)?

Experts recommend that pregnant, those trying to get pregnant and breastfeeding individuals receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The approved vaccines increase antibodies towards the disease, as a result, reducing risk of infection and COVID-19 complications and hospitalizations for both mom and baby. Consult with your medical provider to make the most informed decision for yourself and your baby.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

www.immunizationforwomen.org
www.cdc.gov
www.flu.gov

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS & GYNECOLOGISTS

www.immunizationforwomen.org
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

GENERAL VACCINE SAFETY

www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety

COVID-19 SAFETY

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html

How dangerous is influenza (the flu) in pregnant women?

Pregnant women who get the flu can become much sicker than women who get the flu when they are not pregnant. Studies have shown that pregnant women with a respiratory illness from the flu have more medical visits, more hospitalization and longer hospital stays.

I am pregnant. Should I get the influenza vaccines (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. Pregnant women and their babies are at an increased risk of serious complications from the flu. The flu shot given during pregnancy helps protect infants younger than 6 months who are too young to get the flu vaccine and have no other way of getting flu antibodies.

The flu shot has been given to millions of pregnant women over many years. It has been shown to be safe for pregnant women and their babies. Pregnant women can get the flu shot at any point during the flu season (typically October through May).

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

The flu shot can be given at any time during pregnancy. Pregnant women are advised to get the shot as soon as possible when it becomes available and to speak to their OBGYN or other providers about being immunized.

Which flu vaccine should pregnant women get?

Pregnant women should get the inactivated influenza vaccine (“flu shot”) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm.

Currently, there are two types of flu shots you can get:

- 1) Trivalent shot
- 2) Quadrivalent shot

The trivalent shot covers three flu strains, and the quadrivalent shot covers four. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists do not recommend one type over the other.

Will the flu shot give me the flu?

No, you cannot get the flu from receiving the flu shot. However, you may still get cold symptoms because the flu shot does not protect against the common cold.

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

Yes. Pregnant women should not get 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 nursing, and for family members.

Are preservatives in flu vaccines safe for my baby?

Yes. Thimerosal is a mercury-containing preservative used in very small amounts in the flu vaccine. It is safe for pregnant women and their babies. There is no scientific evidence that thimerosal causes problems for pregnant women or children born to women who received thimerosal-containing vaccines during pregnancy.

Although thimerosal-free types of the vaccine also are available, ACIP does not indicate a preference for thimerosal-containing or thimerosal-free vaccines for any group, including pregnant women. Pregnant women can get the flu shot with or without thimerosal.

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

Getting your flu shot while you are pregnant is the most important step in protecting yourself and your baby against the flu. After birth, breastfeeding your baby and making sure other family members and caregivers get the flu vaccine will further protect your baby.

I am breastfeeding my baby. Is it safe to get the flu shot?

Yes. Flu vaccines can be given to women who are breastfeeding if they did not get the shot when they are pregnant. Women who are breastfeeding can get either the flu shot or the nasal spray. A woman who breastfeeds passes antibodies through her breast milk, which also may reduce the baby's chances of getting sick with the flu.

Is it safe to get a flu shot at my local pharmacy?

Yes. Pharmacists are well equipped to give immunizations, and most pharmacies will vaccinate pregnant women. If your OBGYN or other provider's office does not offer the flu shot, ask about your options. Be sure to let your OBGYN or other provider know when you have gotten the flu shot so that your medical record can be updated.

What should I do if I think I have the flu?

If you think you have flu symptoms, such as fever or chills and exhaustion, contact your obstetrician-gynecologist or other provider's office right away. Be sure to tell the nurse, obstetrician-gynecologist or other provider that you are pregnant. If you have severe symptoms, such as fever higher than 100.0°F along with trouble breathing, dizziness when standing, or pain in your chest, go to the nearest emergency department.

You will likely be given an antiviral medication that is safe to use during pregnancy.

Can I get the tetanus toxoid, reduced diphtheria toxoid and acellular pertussis (Tdap) shot and flu shot at the same time?

Yes. You can get more than one vaccine in the same visit.

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www.immunizationforwomen.org

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION

*Seasonal influenza: Pregnant women
and influenza (flu).*

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy/hcp-toolkit/
flu-vaccine-pregnancy.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy/hcp-toolkit/flu-vaccine-pregnancy.html)

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Pregnant Women

www.flu.gov/at-risk/pregnant/index.html

Retrieved December 1, 2021

TDAP VACCINE

All pregnant women should receive the Tdap vaccine, tetanus toxoid, reduced diphtheria toxoid and acellular pertussis (whooping cough). This is particularly important for pregnant women because they are susceptible to acquiring pertussis (whooping cough), and newborns are at highest risk of having severe complications for pertussis.

In addition, when women receive the Tdap vaccine during pregnancy, some of the protection against pertussis is transferred to the baby from the mother. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that pregnant women receive a Tdap vaccination, preferable during the late second or third trimester.

We strongly recommend that you get the Tdap vaccine at your 28 week visit each pregnancy. The vaccine is safe and effective and has not been shown to cause autism or other adverse effects.

Your family who will be in contact with your newborn, or who have contact with infants younger than 12 months of age, should contact their primary healthcare provider (PCP) to receive a Tdap vaccination. This helps provide protection for your baby because he or she cannot get this vaccination until 2 months of age.

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