

THE FLU VACCINE IS YOUR BEST SHOT

Flu Vaccine: answers to additional questions sometimes asked by pregnant women.

Is the flu vaccine safe if I am pregnant?

- Injectable influenza vaccines are considered safe for pregnant women and the developing child. The flu vaccine is made from particles of inactivated (killed) flu viruses. It cannot cause the flu.
- Pregnant women should not get the intranasal flu vaccine (Flumist). It is a live vaccine and is not considered safe for pregnant women.
- While the killed virus part of the flu vaccine is considered safe, some people may have serious allergic reactions to other ingredients in the flu vaccine. There is no increased risk of having an allergic reaction because you are pregnant.
- Allergic reactions and drugs used to treat them may affect both the pregnant woman and her unborn child. No one knows for sure how the drugs used to treat reactions could affect the pregnancy so if you have had an allergic reaction to flu vaccine in the past, you should consult with your doctor before getting this year's flu vaccine.

What are the benefits of receiving the flu vaccine?

- It will help protect you against flu and its complications. Pregnancy places extra demands on the body which can increase your risk of complications from the flu.
- If you are expected to deliver during the flu season, getting the flu vaccine means that antibodies are passed on to the baby during pregnancy and in breast milk. It will help protect your infant from flu and its complications.

Why should pregnant women receive the flu vaccine?

- The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that all pregnant women are immunized with the flu vaccine. Pregnant women have higher rates of complications and flu-related hospitalizations than non-pregnant women. The number of hospitalizations rises with increasing length of pregnancy after the first trimester.
- Increased maternal age and women who are carrying multiple fetuses are especially at high risk for increased complications from the flu.

- The Public Health Agency of Canada highly recommends the injectable flu vaccines for those pregnant women who are at high risk of flu related complications because they have chronic health conditions such as: Heart (cardiac) or lung (pulmonary) disorders such as bronchopulmonary dysplasia, cystic fibrosis and asthma; Diabetes, cancer, renal diseases, anemia, metabolic diseases, or any other disease or treatment that may weaken the immune system.

In Summary

NACI recommends the inclusion of all pregnant women, at any stage of pregnancy, among high priority recipients of influenza vaccine due to the risk of influenza-associated morbidity in pregnant women, evidence of adverse neonatal outcomes associated with maternal respiratory hospitalization or influenza during pregnancy evidence that vaccination of pregnant women protects their newborns from influenza and influenza-related hospitalization, and evidence that infants born during influenza season to vaccinated women are less likely to be premature, small for gestational age, and low birth weight. The nasal flu vaccine (Flumist) is not recommended because is considered as a live vaccine.

What should I do if I am still not sure whether to have the flu vaccine?

Contact your health provider if you still have any questions about the flu vaccine.

Candidate: _____

Nurse: _____

Date: _____

References: 2014 Product Monographs (Agriflu, Vaxigrip Fluviral and FluMist); Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/index-eng.php>;

The information on this fact sheet contains the most up-to-date information published by the Public Health Agency of Canada as of 19 January, 2015 and is provided to VON clients. It is a summary and will not tell you everything about the vaccine. Contact your health provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about the vaccine.

