

Why you should get immunised against the

FLU

Influenza immunisation of pregnant women is recommended by the World Health Organization

Because of the higher risk of influenza infection to mother and baby, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that pregnant women should be the highest priority in seasonal influenza vaccination programmes.

Immunising a pregnant woman offers protection both to the mother, the unborn baby and to the newborn baby. And it is free† for you.

Influenza immunisation could save you and your pregnancy

If you are pregnant it is important to protect yourself and your unborn baby from influenza.

Experience from previous influenza outbreaks shows that pregnant women, their unborn babies and their new infants are at greater risk from complications associated with influenza.

There are a range of changes that occur during pregnancy that put expectant mothers at greater risk, including changes to lung capacity, the immune system and heart rate response.

Pregnant women with existing medical conditions are at even greater risk of severe influenza-related illness.

Proven safety record for pregnant women

The influenza vaccine has been used for many years for pregnant women with no safety concerns and can be given during any trimester of pregnancy. There is no increased risk of reactions to the vaccine for pregnant women or their unborn babies.

† usually early March to 31 July each year.

Immunisation during pregnancy also protects babies after they are born

Newborns and young infants have higher rates of influenza and hospitalisation than other children but are too young to respond effectively to influenza immunisation. However, if you have been immunised in pregnancy you are likely to pass on some protection to your newborn baby (in part by passing antibodies across the placenta).

The protection from immunisation during pregnancy is also passed on to your baby so they are born with some protection against influenza for the first few months of life.

Studies have shown that babies born to mothers who received the influenza vaccine while pregnant are significantly less likely to be hospitalised with influenza than babies whose mothers did not receive the vaccine.*

The influenza vaccine will not harm your baby

The influenza vaccine does not actually cross the placenta into your baby. The vaccine simply stimulates your own immune system to make antibodies that can fight off the virus. Research has shown that the immunisation of pregnant women reduces the risk of influenza not only in the mother but also in their newborn baby.

Vaccination and breastfeeding

The influenza vaccine can be given to a breastfeeding woman. Protecting the mother can help prevent her becoming infected and transmitting influenza to her baby. Breastfeeding may offer some protection against influenza.

Maternal influenza immunisation protects two high-risk groups with one vaccine dose – pregnant mothers and their babies.



Pregnant women with influenza are nearly 5 times more likely to be admitted to hospital than women who are not pregnant.



Influenza.
Don't get it.
Don't give it.

Questions and Answers

When is the best time to immunise?

The influenza vaccine can be given at any time during pregnancy. It is preferable to give the vaccine as soon as the vaccine is available (usually from early March) well before the start of the influenza season. The funded vaccine is available through to 31 July.

How many doses do I need?

Just one dose of influenza vaccine is required each year.

I've had a history of miscarriage. Is it OK to receive the vaccine?

Yes. The influenza vaccine does not increase the risk of miscarriage. However, catching influenza can increase the risk.

I am pregnant and want the influenza vaccine but I have a cold, should I still get it?

If you don't have a high fever and are only experiencing a cold, runny nose or sniffles, it's okay to receive the vaccine. However, if you're very unwell, wait until you are better. If in doubt, check with your Lead Maternity Carer, GP or Practice Nurse.

I have just had my baby, can I have the influenza vaccine and will it protect my baby if I am breastfeeding?

Yes, it is safe for you to have the influenza vaccine. Breastfeeding may also offer some initial protection to your baby. However your baby will have more protection if you are vaccinated in pregnancy.

Is the influenza vaccine a live vaccine?

No. The seasonal influenza vaccine does not contain any live virus; it is completely inactivated and cannot give you influenza.

Is there thiomersal (mercury) preservative in the influenza vaccine?

No. Vaccines used in New Zealand are preservative free.

I had the influenza vaccine last year, why do I need it this year?

Yearly immunisation is recommended for two reasons: first, because protection lessens over time; and second, because each year influenza can be caused by different influenza viruses. The strains in the vaccine are frequently changed to respond to the changing virus pattern.

I am pregnant and work with children, should I have the influenza vaccine?

Yes. Influenza infection rates are generally highest in children, and they are a major source of the spread of influenza. The influenza virus may be found in respiratory secretions (breathing, coughing and sneezing) for two weeks or longer in children. In particular, young infants are at high risk of influenza so it is important to immunise those around them to stop the spread of influenza to them.

* Benowitz I. et al, Influenza Vaccine for Mothers Protects Infants, CID 2010;51, 1355-1361.

The influenza vaccine is a prescription medicine. Talk to your doctor or nurse about the benefits and possible risks. TAPS CH4221. IMAC1513.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
FIGHTFLU.CO.NZ
0800 466 863

IMMUNISATION
ADVISORY CENTRE
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
To Wharangi o Tamaki Makaurau

MINISTRY OF
HEALTH
MANATŪ HAUORA