

# Pregnant Women Need a Flu Shot

Flu vaccine comes in two forms: an injectable form (the flu shot) and a nasal spray. The *nasal spray* (or LAIV) flu vaccine is **not recommended** for pregnant women.

Pregnant women should receive the flu shot. The nasal spray is for use in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are **not** pregnant.

Women who are not pregnant but are breastfeeding may receive the nasal spray flu vaccine.

***Influenza (the flu) is a serious illness, especially when you are pregnant.***

***FACT: The flu can cause serious illness in pregnant women.***

Getting the flu can cause serious problems when you are pregnant. Even if you are generally healthy, changes in immune, heart, and lung functions during pregnancy make you more likely to get seriously ill from the flu. Pregnant women who get the flu are at higher risk of hospitalization, and even death, than non-pregnant women. Severe illness in the pregnant mother can also be dangerous to her fetus because it increases the chance for serious problems such as premature labor and delivery.

***The flu shot is the best protection for you – and your baby.***

***FACT: Getting a flu shot is the first and most important step in protecting yourself against the flu.***

When you get your flu shot, your body starts to make antibodies that help protect you against the flu. Antibodies can be passed on to your unborn baby, and help protect the baby for up to 6 months after he or she is born. This is important because babies younger than 6 months of age are too young to get a flu vaccine. If you breastfeed your infant, antibodies may also be passed in breast milk.

It takes about two weeks to make antibodies after getting flu vaccine. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or clinic about getting vaccinated as soon as you can.

***The flu shot is safe for you and for your unborn child.***

***FACT: The flu shot is safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women and their infants.***

You can receive the flu shot at any time, during any trimester, while you are pregnant. Millions of flu shots have been given to pregnant women over many years. Flu shots have not been shown to cause harm to pregnant women or their infants.

If you have your baby before getting your flu shot, you still need to get vaccinated. The flu is spread from person to person. You, or others who care for your baby, may get the flu, and pass it to the baby. Because babies younger than 6 months are too young to receive the vaccine, it is important that everyone who cares for your baby get a flu vaccine, including other household members, relatives, and babysitters.

***FACT: The side effects of the flu vaccine are mild when compared to the disease itself.***

After getting your flu shot, you may experience some mild side effects. The most common side effects include soreness, tenderness, redness and/or swelling where the shot was given. Sometimes you might have headache, muscle aches, fever, and nausea or feel tired.



National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases  
Office of Director



**Even healthy pregnant women can get the flu and have serious complications – know the signs and symptoms of flu.**

**FACT: If you have symptoms of the flu, call your doctor immediately.**

If you have flu-like symptoms—even if you have already had a flu shot—call your doctor, nurse, or clinic right away. Doctors can prescribe medicine to treat the flu and lessen the chance of serious illness. These medicines must be started as soon as possible. If you have any or all of the following symptoms, contact your doctor or nurse immediately:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Headache
- Body aches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea



Having a fever from flu, or any other infection early in pregnancy, increases the chance of having a baby with birth defects or other problems. Fever can be brought down with Tylenol® (acetaminophen), but you should still call your doctor or nurse.

If you have any of the following signs, call 911 and seek emergency medical care right away:

- Problems breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness or confusion
- Severe or constant vomiting
- Decreased or no movement of your baby
- High fever that is not responding to Tylenol® or other acetaminophen

Because you are pregnant, you are recommended to get the flu shot to protect yourself and your baby from the flu. Talk to your health care provider about getting a flu shot. For more information about the flu or the vaccine, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>.

