

## **2009 H1N1 INFLUENZA SHOTS AND PREGNANT WOMEN: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PATIENTS**

### **Why does CDC advise pregnant women to receive the 2009 H1N1 influenza (flu) vaccine (shot)?**

Getting the flu shot is the single best way to protect against the flu. It is important for a pregnant woman to receive both the 2009 H1N1 flu shot and the seasonal flu shot. A pregnant woman who gets any type of flu has a greater chance for serious health problems. Compared with people in general who get 2009 H1N1 flu, pregnant women with 2009 H1N1 flu are more likely to be admitted to hospitals. Pregnant women are also more likely to have serious illness and from 2009 H1N1 flu.

When a pregnant woman gets a flu shot, it can protect both her and her baby. Research has found that pregnant women who had a flu shot get sick less often with the flu than do pregnant women who did not get a flu shot. Babies born to mothers who had a flu shot in pregnancy also get sick with flu less often than do babies whose mothers did not get a flu shot.

### **Are there flu vaccines that pregnant women should not get?**

The seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu vaccines can be given by shot or by nasal spray. Pregnant women should get the "flu shot"—a vaccine made with killed flu virus. This one is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The other type of flu vaccine—a nasal spray—is not approved for pregnant women. This vaccine is made with live, weakened flu virus. Nasal spray flu vaccine should be used only in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant. The nasal spray vaccine is safe for women after they have delivered, even if they are nursing.

### **Can the 2009 H1N1 flu shot be given at any time during pregnancy?**

Both seasonal flu shots and 2009 H1N1 flu shots are recommended to pregnant women at any time during pregnancy.

### **How many 2009 H1N1 flu shots will a pregnant woman need to get?**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the use of one shot for full protection for persons 10 years and older. Therefore, a pregnant woman is recommended to get one dose of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

### **Should the 2009 H1N1 flu shot be given to a pregnant woman who has had flu between April 2009 and now? Do I need a test to know if I need the shot or not?**

A pregnant woman who had a flu-like illness at any time in the past should still get the 2009 H1N1 shot because she cannot assume that the illness she had was caused by the 2009 H1N1 virus. Those pregnant women that had flu symptoms in the past do not need to be tested now, but should get the vaccine.

**Can family members of a pregnant woman receive the nasal spray vaccine?**

Pregnant women should not receive nasal spray for the seasonal or 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, but it is okay for a pregnant woman to be around a family or other close contact who has received nasal spray flu vaccine. The nasal spray vaccine can be used in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant and in women after they deliver, even if they are nursing.

**Can a pregnant health care provider give the live nasal spray flu vaccine?**

Yes. No special precautions are needed. Nurses and doctors should wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub before and after giving the vaccine.

**If a pregnant woman delivers her baby before receiving her seasonal flu shot or her 2009 H1N1 flu shot, should she still receive them?**

Yes. Besides protecting her from infection, the shot may also help protect her young infant. Flu shots are only given to infants 6 months of age and older. Everyone who lives with or gives care to an infant less than 6 months of age should get both the seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 vaccines. A woman can get either the shots or the nasal spray after she delivers.

**Can a breastfeeding mother receive flu shots?**

Yes. Both seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu shots or nasal spray should be given to breastfeeding mothers. Breastfeeding is fully compatible with flu vaccination, and preventing the flu in mothers can reduce the chance that the infant will get the flu. Also, by breastfeeding, mothers can pass on to the infant the antibodies that their bodies make in response to the flu shots, which can reduce the infant's chances of getting sick with the flu. This is especially important for infants less than 6 months old, who have no other way of receiving vaccine antibodies, since they are too young to be vaccinated.

Talk to your doctor or visit <http://www.flu.gov/> or <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pregnancy/> to learn more.