

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine FAQs: Pregnancy

1. What is flu?

Flu is a sickness that spreads easily from person to person. It is caused by a virus that affects the nose, throat, and lungs. Some people with flu may have mild illnesses, but others may be very sick and need to be hospitalized. In rare cases, flu can cause death.

2. Who is recommended to get a flu vaccine?

Almost everyone aged 6 months and older, with few exceptions, should get a flu shot every year, including patients who are pregnant or breastfeeding. If you get flu during pregnancy, you are more likely to become seriously ill and need hospital care than if you were not pregnant. Pregnancy also increases the risk of dying from flu. If you have questions or concerns about flu vaccination, talk to your doctor.

3. Do flu vaccines work?

Yes. Flu vaccines help stop many people from getting very sick every year.

- Flu vaccines also help during pregnancy by:
- Keeping pregnant people out of the hospital
- Making flu less serious if you still get sick
- Protecting babies for several months after birth against flu and getting hospitalized from flu

4. When should I get a flu vaccine?

Most people should get a flu vaccine in September or October.

It is best to get the vaccine by the end of October, but getting a flu vaccine later is still helpful if the virus is still spreading in your community. Getting a flu vaccine during July and August also can be considered during the third trimester of pregnancy, because the vaccine can help protect infants from flu for several months after birth (when they are too young to be vaccinated). If you are pregnant, you should get a flu shot and not the nasal spray flu vaccine.

5. Can a flu vaccine give me flu?

No. The flu vaccine cannot give you flu. Flu vaccines contain inactivated (killed) or weakened influenza viruses that cannot cause flu-related illness.



Influenza (Flu) Vaccine FAQs: Pregnancy

6. Do flu vaccines have side effects?

Some people may have mild side effects that can feel like flu, such as:

- A sore arm
- Headache
- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Feeling tired
- Runny nose or cough

Side effects from the nasal spray flu vaccine may include runny nose, wheezing, headache, vomiting, muscle aches, fever, sore throat, and cough. These side effects are normal and usually go away in a few days.

7. If I already had flu this season, should I still get a vaccine?

Yes. More than one strain of flu can spread each season. Having been sick from one strain of flu does not protect you from other strains that may be circulating. Flu vaccines provide protection against multiple strains of the virus.

8. Can I get a flu shot and other vaccines at the same time?

Yes. Most vaccines can be given at the same visit. Talk to your doctor to see what is right for you.

9. Is there treatment if I get flu while pregnant?

Yes. If you think you have flu and you are pregnant (or you have had a baby within the past 2 weeks), contact your doctor right away. Taking an antiviral medication as soon as possible is recommended and works best when started 1 to 2 after symptoms begin.

