

FLU FACTS

Pregnant women are at higher risk of complications from the flu than women who are not pregnant. They are more likely to develop serious complications like pneumonia and are more likely to be hospitalized.

The best protection against the flu is to get a flu shot. Data from millions of women obtained over many years show that the flu shot is safe during pregnancy. Pregnant women should get the flu shot as soon as possible after it is available.

The flu shot does not cause the flu. The vaccine in the shot is made from either killed flu viruses or weakened flu viruses. Neither are capable of causing flu illness.

Babies of women who get the flu shot during pregnancy receive antibodies against the flu, which helps protect them until they can get vaccinated at age 6 months.

Symptoms of the flu include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle or body aches, and headache.

Pregnant women and women up to 2 weeks postpartum who have symptoms of the flu should see their health-care providers right away to get antiviral medication, regardless of whether they have had the flu shot. Antiviral medication should be considered for pregnant women and women up to 2 weeks postpartum who have been exposed to the flu.

Oral oseltamivir is the recommended antiviral treatment because it has been the most studied in pregnant women. Antiviral medication works best if given within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms, but it can be given at any time after symptoms appear to help reduce the severity of flu symptoms and shorten the course of the illness.

While the flu shot is the best protection against the flu, additional precautions include washing hands frequently, covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and avoiding close contact with people who are sick.

For more information:

Antiviral treatment and chemoprophylaxis for pregnant and postpartum women: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/avrec_ob.htm
Addressing concerns of pregnant women about the flu shot: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/vaccination-possible-safety-signal.html>
Health-care provider tool kit: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/prepare-practice-tools.htm>
Side effects: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/keyfacts.htm#side-effects>

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