



**FLU IS ONE THING YOU
DON'T WANT TO SHARE
WITH YOUR BABY.**

Vaccination is the only protection.

www.immunisation.ie

BE SURE. BE SAFE. VACCINATE.

FLU VACCINE 2011-2012

INFORMATION FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

What is seasonal flu (influenza)?

Seasonal flu is a highly infectious viral illness of the respiratory tract that can be life threatening.

Can flu cause serious illness?

Flu is a serious illness with most deaths from seasonal flu occurring in people aged 65 years and over. Swine Flu, a new virus caused a pandemic in 2009 and infected in particular young children, pregnant women and those under 65 years with long term medical conditions.

Is it cold or flu?

Flu symptoms come on suddenly with a fever, muscle aches, headache and fatigue. A cold is a much less severe illness than flu. A cold usually starts gradually with a sore throat and a blocked or runny nose. Symptoms of a cold are generally mild compared to flu.

What is the seasonal (annual) flu vaccine?

Each year the seasonal (annual) flu vaccine contains three common flu virus strains. The flu virus changes each year this is why a new flu vaccine has to be given each year. This year's flu vaccine contains the Swine Flu strain.

Why do pregnant women need to get seasonal flu vaccine?

During the pandemic pregnant women were at higher risk of complications from the Swine Flu virus. The Swine Flu virus is still around and is expected to be the one of the common strains this winter. Pregnant women need to be protected. The seasonal

flu vaccine will provide protection against the Swine Flu virus.

The vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy.

Is it safe for pregnant women to be vaccinated?

Yes. The vaccine is safe for pregnant women. Seasonal flu vaccines have been given for more than 60 years. Reactions are generally mild and serious side effects are very rare. Seasonal flu vaccine has been recommended for several years for all pregnant women in the USA.

How does seasonal flu vaccine work?

Seasonal flu vaccine helps your immune system to produce antibodies to the flu virus. When someone who has been vaccinated comes into contact with the virus these antibodies attack the virus.

Will my baby be protected if I am vaccinated?

Vaccination during pregnancy can protect your baby and also helps prevent you getting flu and passing it on to your baby.

Who should NOT get seasonal flu vaccine?

The vaccine should not be given to;

- Those with a history of severe allergic (anaphylaxis) reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine or any of its constituents.

What about people with egg allergy?

People with egg allergy can get seasonal flu vaccine. This may be given by your GP or you may need referral to a hospital specialist.

When should vaccination be postponed?

There are very few reasons why vaccination should be postponed. Vaccination should be re-scheduled if you have an acute illness with a temperature greater than 38°C.

Is there thiomersal in the seasonal flu vaccine?

No. The seasonal flu vaccine does not contain thiomersal. Thiomersal is a mercury based preservative which was used in some of the Swine Flu vaccines.

I was pregnant at the end of the 2010-2011 campaign and received seasonal flu vaccine then. I have not yet delivered my baby so should I receive seasonal flu vaccine now?

Yes. You should have a further dose of seasonal flu vaccine now. This is because immunity from the first dose could have waned and pregnant women have been shown to be at increased risk of influenza and its complications.

Can the flu vaccine give me the flu?

No. The flu vaccine cannot give you the flu because it does not contain any live viruses.

How long does it take the vaccine to work?

The vaccine starts to work within two weeks.

What can I expect after vaccination?

The most common side effects will be mild and may include soreness, redness or swelling where the injection was given. Headache, fever, aches and

tiredness may occur. Some people may have mild sweating and shivering as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not flu and will pass after a day or so.

What if I don't feel well after vaccination?

If you have a temperature after the vaccine, take paracetamol, as it is safe in pregnancy, and it's important for you and your baby to avoid fever. Do not take ibuprofen or aspirin (unless advised by your obstetrician). Remember if you are unwell after getting a vaccine, it could be for some other reasons - don't assume it's the flu vaccine and seek medical advice if needed.

When should I get the flu vaccine?

You should get the flu vaccine as early as possible in your pregnancy. The flu season usually occurs between September and March.

How do I get vaccinated?

If you have a 'Medical Card' or 'GP Visit Card' the vaccine and consultation are free.

If you do not have a 'Medical Card' or 'GP Visit Card' you will be charged a consultation fee for seasonal flu vaccine.

Please make an appointment now.

**For more information visit
www.immunisation.ie**



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Published by: HSE National Immunisation Office.
Publication date: September 2011.