

These symptoms are usually mild and last only a few hours.

- The new purified influenza vaccines we use **do not** cause fever, tiredness, or muscle aches.
- Several studies have found no long term adverse effects.
- The flu vaccine only contains parts of the flu virus, and it **cannot** cause the flu.

Is there anyone who should not get vaccinated?

People who are allergic to eggs (that is, have hives, facial swelling or anaphylaxis when they eat eggs) should not get the flu shot because the vaccine may contain traces of egg protein.

People who have had allergic reactions to other vaccines or who have been diagnosed with Guillain Barre Syndrome after an influenza vaccination should consult with a physician before being vaccinated.

What should I do if I still have questions or concerns?

If you have questions or concerns about influenza, or the influenza vaccine and pregnancy, ask your doctor. You can also check out the phone numbers or web sites listed below:

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/publichealth/flu

or call the ServiceOntario INFOLine at:

1-877-844-1944

TTY 1-800-387-5559

TTY (Toronto) 416-327-4282

Hours of operation: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Toronto Public Health

<http://www.toronto.ca/health/flu/index.htm>

Health Canada: Flu Shot Information

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/dc-ma/influenza-eng.php

MotherRisk (Hospital for Sick Children)

at 416-813-6780

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Influenza Q & A for Pregnant Women and their Families

What is influenza?

- Influenza is a disease caused by the influenza virus.
- Symptoms include: fever, headache, runny nose, cough and muscle aches.
- Influenza is often called “the flu”, but people use the term “flu” to refer to many other infections as well.
- Influenza can affect anyone, including healthy adults, newborn babies, and pregnant women. About one in six people will get influenza every year.
- Influenza is more likely to be severe and complicated in pregnant women than in other adults.
- In Canada almost all influenza occurs in a 12 to 16 week period, some time between November and March.
- Influenza can be dangerous when it is complicated, for instance by pneumonia or seizures.

How is influenza spread?

Influenza is very easily spread by direct contact, and by droplets expelled during breathing, talking, sneezing or coughing. When one person in a household has influenza, there is a 15 per cent chance that another household member will get it.

What is the influenza vaccine?

The Influenza vaccine (“the flu shot”) is a safe and effective way to prevent both mild and severe cases of influenza. The flu vaccine is made up of antigens from **killed** influenza viruses.

The flu vaccine starts working a few days after you get it and is fully effective after 14 days. It will continue to protect you for at least nine months.

Vaccines that provide protection against influenza have been used for more than 60 years. Each year, more than 200 million people around the world get their flu vaccine, including more than four million Ontarians, and more than two million pregnant women in the US and Canada.

I am pregnant. Should I get the influenza vaccine?

Yes! The Canadian National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that all pregnant women and breast feeding mothers be vaccinated against influenza.

Healthy pregnant women in their second and third trimester of pregnancy are two to four times more likely to be hospitalized due to influenza than non-pregnant women. Of 1000 women in their third trimester, three to five who are otherwise healthy will be hospitalized for influenza related complications.

By getting the flu shot, you not only will protect yourself from getting influenza, you will also protect your baby from being born prematurely, and from getting influenza in the first year of life.

The protective effect from the flu shot is passed from mother to baby through the placenta.

Getting the flu shot while pregnant makes your baby 60 per cent less likely to get influenza.

Should my children be vaccinated?

Yes! NACI recommends that all children over six months of age be vaccinated against influenza. Children who are sick with influenza can develop ear infections, pneumonia, dehydration and febrile seizures. Influenza is the sixth leading cause of death in children less than five years of age.

Children under six months of age are too young to respond well to the vaccine, but can get seriously ill from influenza. Vaccinating their household and close family contacts (fathers, siblings, caregivers etc.) will help to protect them from influenza. Infants with siblings are three times more likely to get influenza than infants without siblings.

Is it safe to get the influenza vaccine while pregnant?

YES! It is safe to receive the flu shot during any trimester of pregnancy and while breast feeding.

The flu shot will not cause any harm to your baby.

More than two million pregnant women in the US and Canada get vaccinated every year. No serious side effects associated with pregnancy have been found.

What are the side effects of the influenza vaccine?

- The most common side effect is a sore arm (at the site of injection). This usually lasts for a few hours, but in some instances may last a few days.
- About one in 10,000 people experience red, itchy eyes, dry cough, and sore throat.