

Text messaging boosts flu vaccine rates in pregnant women

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A study by researchers at the Mailman School of Public Health evaluated the impact of text messaging reminders for influenza vaccine in a low-income obstetric population. The findings showed that sending text messages to this population of women resulted in an uptick in influenza vaccination, especially for those who received the messages early in their third trimester. Results from the paper, "Influenza Vaccine Text Message Reminders for Urban, Low-Income Pregnant Women: A Randomized Controlled Trial," were published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, a special issue on the latest methods and practices in improving birth outcomes.

The researchers followed 1187 obstetric patients from five community-based clinics in New York City that are part of an ambulatory care network which routinely provides influenza vaccinations to pregnant women. Women in the intervention group received five weekly text messages about the importance of the vaccine starting in mid-September 2011 and two text message appointment reminders. Both groups received standard automated telephone appointment reminders.

The results showed that text messaging was successfully used to increase vaccination coverage. Adjusting for gestational age and number of clinic visits, women who received the intervention were 30% more likely to be vaccinated. A subgroup of women early in the third trimester had the highest intervention effect - 61.9% of the intervention group was vaccinated versus 49% for the control group.

Vaccine [text message](#) reminder-recalls in this population have been limited. Earlier studies by some of these investigators at Columbia looked at text messaging vaccine reminder-recalls to improve [influenza vaccination](#) rates in pediatric and adolescent populations.

"Vaccination during pregnancy helps to protect newborns," said Melissa Stockwell, MD, MPH, Mailman School assistant professor of Population and Family Health and assistant professor of Pediatrics at Columbia and a physician at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. "To achieve protection before influenza begins circulating in the community, we strongly recommend that women receive influenza vaccination during pregnancy and as soon as the vaccine becomes available in the fall."

Provided by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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