

# Is it safe to get the flu shot while pregnant?

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When pregnant, women are more susceptible to contracting different viruses like the flu or the common cold and cough as a result of a lowered immune system. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that anyone over the age of 6 months get a flu shot, there is confusion about the safety and efficacy of the flu shot

during pregnancy, how the flu shot may impact an unborn baby, and more.

Tera Howard, M.D. in the University of Alabama at Birmingham Division of Women's Reproductive Health Care and at UAB Medicine's Leeds Clinic, addresses common questions and concerns that [women](#) may have about the flu shot during peak flu season.

### **Q: Is the flu shot safe for pregnant women and the baby?**

A: The flu shot is very safe for both mom and baby. In fact, giving mom the vaccination during pregnancy provides added protection to a newborn baby, who cannot get vaccinated until 6 months old. A common myth is that the flu shot gives you the flu, which is not true. Another common myth is that the [flu vaccine](#), like other vaccines, gives the baby autism. This is also not true.

### **Q: Should pregnant women get the flu shot?**

A: Absolutely. Pregnant women who get the flu are more likely to be admitted to the hospital and the [intensive care unit](#) when compared to non-[pregnant women](#) who get the flu. Because of how serious the virus can be, I recommend that every [pregnant woman](#) get the vaccine (unless she has an allergy). An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure.

### **Q: If I am pregnant and start experiencing flu-like symptoms, what should I do? Should I visit the ER?**

A: If you start to experience flu-like symptoms, which includes a fever, chills, coughing and/or a headache, you should call your doctor. You will

likely be prescribed Tamiflu, a medication that can help lessen your symptoms and shorten the time that you are sick. We ask that you stay home to minimize the spread of the flu instead of coming into the ER. We only want you to come to the hospital if: you have difficulty breathing, you have a history of asthma or immune suppression, or you have complications with your pregnancy.

**Q: What can I do to protect myself and my baby from the flu and other seasonal viruses?**

A: It is very important to get your vaccination. Remember, prevention is important. Hand-washing is also very important in protecting yourself this season.

**Q: Can you get the flu shot at any point during pregnancy?**

A: Absolutely. The flu shot is recommended at any point during flu season and at any point during your pregnancy. However, getting the [flu shot](#) early on in the flu season is recommended and may be better for both you and baby.

**Q: If I have the flu, can I breastfeed my baby?**

A: If you have the flu, you can breastfeed. Please wash your hands with hot water and wear a mask to decrease the risk of spreading the virus to the baby. Also do this when handling a breast pump or pump parts. Make sure that you remain hydrated and take Tamiflu as prescribed.

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

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