

Receiving flu vaccine during pregnancy can protect infants as well as mothers

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New research by the University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton has shown the positive effects to newly born infants and mothers of receiving the influenza vaccine during pregnancy. Their

findings show that the vaccine can reduce the chance of the infant having influenza by about a third.

Pregnant women and their infants are at an increased risk of severe illness from seasonal and pandemic influenza viruses. The World Health Organisation recommends all [pregnant women](#) are vaccinated against influenza but not every country implements maternal vaccination programs and even where they are available, take up remains low. In the United Kingdom less than half of pregnant women were vaccinated during the 2017/18 influenza season.

Dr. Jessica Jarvis of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Southampton said: "Infants are highly susceptible to influenza for a number of reasons such as absence of prior exposure to the virus and development of immunity. Given that influenza vaccines are only licensed for infants over the age of six months, our study has shown that maternal influenza vaccination can be an important way for mothers to pass on protection on to their child."

The Southampton team analyzed a number of randomized control trials and [observational studies](#) that have been carried out over the last twenty five years. This meant they were able to see the health outcomes for over 670,000 infants globally. Overall the studies showed that there were fewer hospitalizations and clinic visits for infants under the age of six months whose mothers had received the vaccine during pregnancy.

Dr. Jarvis added: "it is very important that pregnant women are aware of the health benefits that vaccination could have to both themselves and their children and communicating these findings can help us to increase vaccine coverage during pregnancy."

The findings have been published in the medical journal *Vaccine*.

More information: J.R. Jarvis et al. The effectiveness of influenza vaccination in pregnancy in relation to child health outcomes: Systematic review and meta-analysis, *Vaccine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.vaccine.2019.12.056](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2019.12.056)

Provided by University of Southampton

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