



## PREGNANCY VAX FACTS

# INFLUENZA (Flu)

Getting vaccinated against influenza during pregnancy can help protect you and your baby from pneumonia, premature birth, stillbirth, and death.

### What is influenza?

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Influenza is most common during the winter months, but it can occur at any time of year.



### Why is influenza vaccination important during pregnancy?

Getting an influenza (flu) vaccine is crucial during pregnancy to protect both you and your baby. Pregnant women are more susceptible to influenza and its complications, such as pneumonia, premature birth, and stillbirth. This increased susceptibility stems from pregnancy-induced changes in the heart, lungs, and immune system. Even healthy women with an uncomplicated pregnancy can develop life-threatening complications.

Babies under six months of age are at the highest risk of hospitalisation and death from influenza. Unfortunately, infants cannot be vaccinated against the flu until they reach six months old. However, vaccinating the mother during pregnancy can significantly reduce the baby's risk of hospitalisation.

The flu vaccine offers **protection for both you and your baby**. When a pregnant woman gets vaccinated, her body produces antibodies that can pass through the placenta to the baby, providing immunity for several months after birth. This maternal antibody protection is crucial for safeguarding infants during their most vulnerable period.

### What are the benefits of getting vaccinated against influenza during pregnancy?

Getting vaccinated against influenza during pregnancy can help to protect you and your baby from the serious consequences of influenza, including:

- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Premature birth
- Stillbirth
- Miscarriage
- Low birth weight
- Brain damage
- Death

### When should I get vaccinated against influenza during pregnancy?

The influenza vaccine can be given safely at any time during pregnancy, and is recommended in every pregnancy. It's best to get the vaccine before flu season starts, but you can get it anytime during the year and it will still help protect you and your baby. You can even get influenza vaccine at the same time as the whooping cough (pertussis) and/or COVID-19 vaccines.



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### *Is the influenza vaccine safe during pregnancy?*

**Yes, the influenza vaccine has been extensively tested and monitored, and is safe for both pregnant women and their babies.** The influenza vaccine has been approved for pregnant women by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which is the Australian government body that regulates medical products. The TGA considers the safety, quality and efficacy of every ingredient in a vaccine before a vaccine is registered for use in Australia.

The safety of pregnancy vaccines are actively monitored by AusVaxSafety, Australia's active vaccine safety monitoring system, with no safety concerns identified.



### *Are there any risks or side effects associated with getting vaccinated against influenza during pregnancy?*

**The influenza vaccine is very safe for pregnant women.** The most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site. Less frequently, the influenza vaccine can also cause mild fever, headache, fatigue, and muscle aches. These side effects are usually mild and go away within a few days.



### *How can I get vaccinated against influenza during pregnancy?*

**Influenza vaccines are free for all pregnant women in Australia.** Talk to your GP, obstetrician, midwife or trusted pharmacist about getting vaccinated against influenza during each pregnancy.

### *What else can I do to protect my baby from influenza?*

**While getting vaccinated during pregnancy is the best way to protect your unborn baby from influenza,** additional steps can further protect your little one. Encourage those around your baby to stay up-to-date on their vaccinations, practice good hygiene, avoid close contact with sick individuals, and seek prompt medical attention if symptoms arise. Additionally, ensure your baby receives all vaccinations according to the National Immunisation Program, **including a yearly flu vaccine from the age of six months.**

