



October 2011

Flu Shots for Women During and After Pregnancy: Information about Oklahoma Women

Getting the flu shot while you are pregnant will help protect you and your baby.

"I was surprised my doctor didn't talk to me about... flu vaccinations."

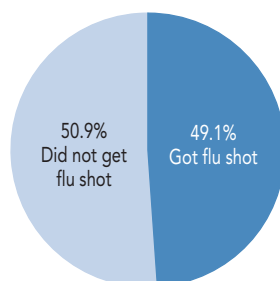
—PRAMS mother

The flu can cause you to become very sick if you are pregnant.¹⁻³ This is because of the changes that your body goes through during pregnancy. These changes make it easier for you to get very ill when you have the flu.¹⁻³ The best way to protect yourself against the flu is to get the flu shot every year.^{4,5} Getting the flu shot while you are pregnant will help protect you, as well as your baby, who is too young to receive the flu shot.⁴⁻⁸ Experts recommend that you get a flu shot if you are pregnant, no matter how far along you are in your pregnancy.^{4,5}

The Oklahoma Experience

Oklahoma collects information on the health of women who are pregnant and recently gave birth. During the 2009-2010 flu season, less than half of women who had a baby in Oklahoma, or 49.1%, got the flu shot.

How Many Women Got the Flu Shot?



Information and Actions for Pregnant Women

Is it safe for you to get a flu shot while you are pregnant?

Yes. The flu shot has been given safely to millions of pregnant women over many years. Flu shots have not been shown to cause any harm to pregnant women or their babies. In fact, flu shots during pregnancy protect the baby.

Is a flu shot safe for unborn babies?

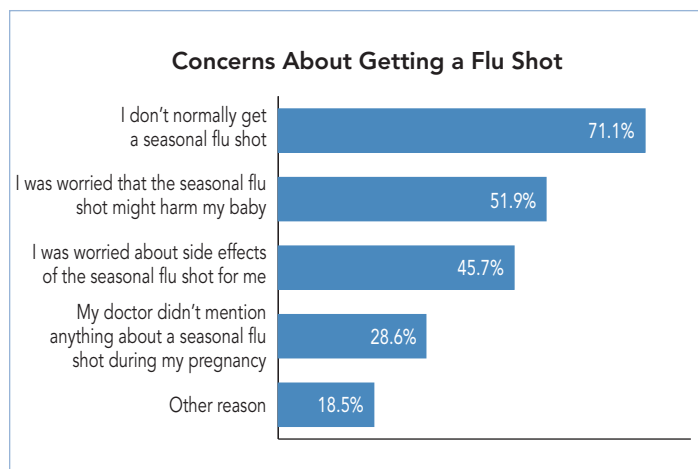
Many studies show that pregnant women who get the flu shot are safe. These studies have shown no sign of harm to pregnant women, to the unborn child (or fetus) or to newborns of vaccinated women. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and CDC keep track of safety issues and have not seen any need for concern.

When should you get the flu shot?

Experts have recommended that you get the flu shot if you are pregnant.

Speak to your health care provider if you have questions about getting the flu shot.

Some Oklahoma women did not get a flu shot during or after their pregnancy. Here are some of the reasons they gave for not getting the shot:



If you have any concerns about the flu shots, talk to your health care provider. A flu shot is recommended during pregnancy because it can protect you and your baby.

Other everyday actions you can take to prevent the flu:

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
When you are sick, stay away from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.**
Use a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Wash your hands often.**
Washing your hands helps protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**
Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Practice other good health habits.**
Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

For more information, visit:

- www.imm.health.ok.gov

References

1. Dodd L, McNeil SA, Fell DB, et al. Impact of influenza exposure on rates of hospital admission and physician visits because of respiratory illness among pregnant women. *CMAJ* 2007;176(4):463-468.
2. Neuzil KM, Reed GW, Mitchel EF, et al. Impact of influenza on acute cardiopulmonary hospitalization in pregnant women. *Am J. Epidemiol.* 1998;148(11):1094-1102.
3. Jamieson D, Theiler R, Rasmussen S. Emerging infections and pregnancy. *Emerging Infectious Disease.* 2006;12:1638-1643.
4. CDC. Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), 2009. *MMWR.* 2009;58(RR08):1-52.
5. ACOG Committee on Obstetric Practice. ACOG committee opinion number 468, 2010. Influenza vaccination during pregnancy. *Obstet Gynecol* 2010;116:1006-7.
6. Zaman K, Roy E, Arifeen S, et al. Effectiveness of maternal influenza immunization in mothers and infants. *New England Journal of Medicine.* 2008;359:1555-1564.
7. Eick A, Uyeki TM, Kilmov A, et. al. Maternal Influenza Vaccination and Effect on Influenza Virus Infection in Young Infants. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2010; doi:10.1001/archpediatrics.2010.192. Accessed on 12/2/2010.
8. Benowitz I, Esposito DB, Gracey KD, Shapiro ED, Vazquez M. Influenza vaccine given to pregnant women reduces hospitalizations due to influenza in their infants. *CID* 2010; 51:1355-1361.