

Fact sheet: Influenza and pregnancy



Influenza can be serious when you are pregnant

Influenza is always unpleasant, but it can be mild and pass quickly in some people. However for pregnant women influenza has the potential to be much more serious and is more likely to cause severe illness. Pregnancy causes temporary changes to the immune system, heart and lungs that make pregnant women more prone to severe illness when they have influenza. Pregnant women with influenza are more likely to be hospitalized and even die. Pregnant women with influenza also face problems for their unborn babies that include premature birth and restricted growth.

Seasonal influenza vaccination – the best choice in pregnancy for mother and child

Seasonal influenza vaccination is safe at all stages of pregnancy. Millions of doses of seasonal influenza vaccine have been given to pregnant women all over the world for many years and this vaccine is widely considered to be safe in pregnancy. Once you have been vaccinated you pass on your immunity to your child, protecting your baby for the first six months of life. Babies under six months are too young to receive the vaccine, so having a vaccinated mother is his or her best protection.

Common side effects of vaccination include soreness and redness at the injection site. Some people experience headache, muscle ache, fever, tiredness and nausea. These side effects are mild and pass quickly compared with influenza.

If you have influenza symptoms while pregnant

If you have any of the following influenza-like symptoms, even if you have already been vaccinated, call your doctor or midwife immediately: fever, cough, sore throat, headache, body aches, runny nose, vomiting and diarrhoea.

If you have any of the following symptoms seek emergency help:

problems breathing

pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen

sudden dizziness or confusion

severe or continuous vomiting

decreased or no movement of your baby

high fever that is not responding to medication