



Flu-Free and a Mom-to-Be

Tips for Staying Healthy during this Flu Season

As a mom-to-be or a mother of young children, you have much more to worry about than just yourself this flu season, particularly with the added threat of the novel H1N1 flu (“swine flu”) virus. Pregnant women are among the groups more susceptible to complications from both seasonal flu and the novel H1N1 flu—two influenza viruses you need to know about this flu season.

We’re learning more about novel H1N1 flu every day from experts studying the virus, so the best thing you can do to stay healthy is to stay informed. Here’s the latest:

- **Get vaccinated against seasonal flu.** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends seasonal flu vaccines for all pregnant women, no matter where they are in their pregnancies. The vaccine for the 2009–2010 flu season is now available. The injectable flu vaccine, made with an inactive form of the virus, is safe for pregnant women in all three trimesters. Seasonal flu vaccine is also safe for children ages six months old and older.
- **Get vaccinated against H1N1 flu when the vaccine becomes available.** Medical experts suspect that the H1N1 flu will pose the same risks for pregnant women as the seasonal flu does—premature labor and pneumonia are possible complications, so it’s important to get the vaccine when it’s available to adults. Experts expect the H1N1 vaccine will offer immune protection in one dose. The H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in October.
- **Practice flu-prevention hygiene.** Wash your hands as often as possible with soap and water; wipe down keyboards and doorknobs with antimicrobial wipes or cleansers; cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and stay home if you are sick.
- **Boost your immunity naturally.** The very best thing you can do to protect against H1N1 flu is to get vaccinated. But you can also boost your immunity naturally by eating a balanced diet packed with fruits and vegetables and get plenty of rest.
- **Be on the lookout for flu symptoms.** Both seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also experience vomiting and diarrhea, especially with H1N1 flu. If you start to experience any of these symptoms or think you may have been exposed to H1N1 flu, call your health care professional immediately for guidance.
- **Talk to your doctor.** Have a conversation with your health care professional about additional steps you can take to protect yourself, your baby and the rest of your family against H1N1 flu. Don’t hesitate to call him or her with questions as they arise.

What should I do if I have a job where I am more likely to be exposed to H1N1, such as a teacher or day-care worker? Should I stop working while I’m pregnant?

In most cases, you will be able to continue to work, but you should closely follow prevention advice and practice the flu prevention hygiene tips. There are some circumstances in which women may want to change some aspects of their jobs if the H1N1 flu becomes more severe. Talk to your health care professional about any concerns you have about your job and risk for H1N1 flu.

If there is an H1N1 outbreak in my child’s school, should I keep him or her home?

No, you should continue to send your child to school. As the 2009–2010 flu season continues, the CDC urges teachers and school administrators to be on the lookout for students with symptoms of H1N1 flu, to separate sick students from well students and to send sick students home as soon as possible.

However, if your child is in one of the groups at high risk for complications from the flu, such as having asthma or diabetes, talk to your child’s health care professional about best steps to take.

Where can I find out more about staying healthy and keeping my family healthy this flu season?

There are a number of resources updated regularly to help keep you informed about both H1N1 flu and seasonal flu. Start with “Flu Free and a Mom to Be” information at www.HealthyWomen.org. Another comprehensive source is published by the federal government: www.flu.gov. Local schools and libraries also have updated information.