Flu Vaccination

Vaccination during pregnancy protects both the mother and unborn child.
Staying healthy during pregnancy

During pregnancy, the well-being and health of the mother and unborn child come first.

Flu (influenza) can be detrimental to the health of the mother and unborn child. During pregnancy, the risk increases of severe cases of flu with complications, such as pneumonia, which must be treated in hospital. In addition, having the flu during pregnancy increases the risk of delayed growth and miscarriage or premature birth.
Seasonal flu: preventable risk to the mother and child

The Standing Committee on Vaccinations (STIKO), an independent group of experts, recommends that all pregnant women have the flu vaccine to protect against seasonal flu. This vaccination has been proven to offer effective protection to the mother and child.

Seasonal flu: what is it?

Flu (seasonal Influenza) is a highly infectious disease. Flu outbreaks occur regularly in this hemisphere during the winter. The chance of becoming infected is particularly high during this season.

Influenza viruses are transmitted by tiny droplets, for example when people speak or cough, as well as by hands or touching contaminated surfaces. The viruses infect the mucous membranes or upper respiratory tract, causing the typical symptoms, such as a dry cough and sore throat, and making the body more susceptible to certain bacterial viruses.
Symptoms of a **real bout of flu**
- Sudden onset accompanied by fever (≥ 38.5°C)
- Dry irritating cough
- Headache, sore throat, aches and pains in the joints and muscles
- Fatigue and occasional, nausea/vomiting

Flu can even cause serious complications, such as pneumonia or myocarditis.

Whereas the common cold, caused by different types of viruses, comes with much milder symptoms and subsides after a few days.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

The flu vaccination does not offer protection against the common cold.

**Why is the flu dangerous during pregnancy?**

During pregnancy, the immune system is less active. This is to protect the unborn child and to keep it from being attacked by the body. It also means, however, that women are more susceptible to infection.

In addition, respiration and circulation change during pregnancy, increasing the risk of a serious bout of the flu.
That is why: Prevention through vaccination is better than treatment.

Limited treatment options during pregnancy

All drugs administered during pregnancy must be carefully considered as the healthy development of the child and safety of the mother have the utmost priority. The same also applies to antiviral drugs, which are only administered after strict examination has been performed on a case-by-case basis.

Antibiotics are ineffective in combatting a viral infection, such as the flu, because they are only suitable for treating bacterial infections. For this reason, antibiotics are used at most for the simultaneous onset of complications caused by bacteria while also observing precautionary measures.
How can I protect myself?

The best protection against flu is vaccination in time before the flu season starts. It helps the body to produce antibodies against flu viruses.

The STIKO recommends vaccination against seasonal flu for all healthy pregnant women from the fourth month of pregnancy. Pregnant women with chronic primary diseases, such as asthma, diabetes or high blood pressure, should be vaccinated in the first trimester.

Annual reformulation of vaccines

As the flu virus can slightly mutate, the vaccines are adapted every year to provide the best possible protection. Trivalent vaccines protect against the three strains of the virus, which are the most common strains expected to spread in the coming flu season. Quadrivalent vaccines offer greater protection in flu seasons where strains of influenza viruses circulate that are not present in the trivalent vaccine. The German Permanent Commission on Immunisation (STIKO) has therefore recommended the use of a quadrivalent vaccine since 2018.

As with any type of medical treatment, not every person reacts the same to each of the different active ingredients. In individual cases, in which pregnant women became infected with flu, the illness was milder.
Health insurance companies bear the cost of recommended vaccinations.
Safety of vaccination confirmed

The safety of the vaccine for both pregnant women and unborn children has been confirmed through a number of studies. An increase in the number of serious reactions due to the vaccine was not determined. There was neither an increase in the number of premature births or caesarean sections, nor were there differences in the babies' state of health after birth.

When should you not vaccinate?
We advise against vaccination should the person have an allergy to one of the constituents of the vaccination.

In the event of a medically diagnosed severe allergy to chicken protein, which is very rare, vaccination should only be given in an environment in which clinical monitoring and
One thing is sure: The risks associated with vaccination are significantly lower than the risk of contracting a serious bout of influenza!

Risks: possible side effects

Possible side effects of the flu vaccination commonly include reddening and soreness at the site of the injection. Fever, nausea or muscle pain are uncommon. These symptoms are generally harmless and indicate that the immune system is being activated. Serious side effects, such as a rash or allergic immediate reaction, only occur in extremely rare cases.
Twice the benefit

Vaccination also protects children after birth because antibodies are passed to the child by the placenta, and is known as ‘passive immunity’. This is vital protection as flu has been frequently linked to complications in children during the first year of life. Infants can only be vaccinated against the flu from the first six months of life.

GOOD TO KNOW

Anyone who has regular contact with a newborn baby should consider a flu vaccination to protect themselves as well as the infant.
Additional protection: good hygiene practice

The risk of contracting the virus can also be reduced in conjunction with the flu vaccine by practicing good hygiene:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap
- If you do become infected, keep a distance from other people
- Try not to use tissues more than once and dispose of them quickly
- Cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm and not into your hand to prevent the spread of viruses/bacteria
Further information

on vaccinations can be found at:
► www.impfen-info.de/grippe
► www.infektionsschutz.de
► www.rki.de/impfen

on healthy growth and development at:
► www.kindergesundheit-info.de

Imprint

Editor: Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA),
50819 Cologne, Germany
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Developed in cooperation with the Robert Koch-Institut.
Design: dotfly GmbH, Cologne, Germany
Date: May 2018
Copies: 4.10.08.18
Order no. 62005006
Images: iStock, Fotolia, Boris Breuer Fotografie

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