
FACTSHEET

September 4, 2009

Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
Ministry of Health Services

H1N1 INFORMATION FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Women who are in their second or third trimester of pregnancy or four weeks post-partum during the flu season are one group that is at higher risk of complications from the H1N1 flu virus. The risk of complications rises as pregnant women progress through the trimesters (i.e. the risk is higher in the third trimester than in the second).

Besides common sense precautions, such as avoiding contact with sick people, staying home if you're sick and coughing into your sleeve, to best protect yourself and your baby during this vulnerable time, there are a number of other steps you can take.

Before you get the flu:

- During one of your regular doctor visits prior to the fall, talk with your doctor about whether you should get a prescription for antivirals in advance. As antivirals work best when taken within 24 hours of showing flu symptoms, in the event you get sick in the fall, you can just call your doctor to get this prescription filled.
- While there is little information about the effect of antiviral drugs in pregnant women or their babies, no serious side effects have been reported. If you do think you have had a side effect to antiviral drugs, call your doctor right away.
- You may also wish to find a "flu buddy" to assist you in accessing medication in the event you become ill and unable to travel.

If you get the flu:

- Treat any fever right away with fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol.
- Call your doctor to get your prescription for antiviral medication filled.
- Be careful not to cough or sneeze in the baby's face.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Your doctor might ask you to wear a mask to keep from spreading this new virus to your baby.

Vaccines:

- It is recommended that pregnant women in their third trimester during flu season receive the seasonal flu vaccine when it is available (expected in early October).
- These women can also receive the H1N1 flu vaccine when it arrives in B.C. in November (or possibly earlier).
- The federal government has plans to buy some unadjuvanted H1N1 flu vaccine to offer to pregnant women, which is expected to be available at the same time as the other supplies of vaccine.

Breastfeeding:

- Mothers who are breastfeeding can continue to nurse their babies while being treated for the flu.

- A mother's milk is made to fight diseases in her baby. This is really important in young babies when their immune system is still growing.
- Do not stop breastfeeding if you are ill; breastfeed early and often. Limit formula feeds if you can as this will help protect your baby from infection.
- If you are too sick to breastfeed, pump and have someone give the expressed milk to your baby.

You can call [HealthLink BC](#) at 8-1-1, 24 hours a day/seven days a week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or are concerned about any illness/symptoms experienced by you or your children.

For the latest facts on the H1N1 flu virus, including back-to-school information, visit www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1.

