

What advice would you give to a woman regarding influenza vaccination between October and March?

- Women who are vaccinated between October and March will make antibodies that can cross the placenta and protect their babies, who will be in the first six months of life during the following influenza season.
- The only way to protect a baby during the next influenza season is for a pregnant women to get an influenza vaccine while pregnant
- The peak of the influenza season varies between years and in some years we have influenza circulating during the summer months
- For this reason, Influenza vaccine is now available almost all year round for pregnant women.

Do babies really need protection from influenza infection?

- For young babies, influenza infection can cause pneumonia and can even lead to death.
- Babies under six months of age are more likely to be hospitalised with influenza than any other age group.
- These babies are too young to get the influenza vaccine themselves.
- Babies are 25 - 40% less likely to be hospitalised from flu-related illness if their mothers are immunised against flu while pregnant.
- It takes at least two weeks to make antibodies after getting an influenza vaccine. After a pregnant woman is vaccinated, these antibodies then cross the placenta to protect the baby during pregnancy and for the first six months of life.
- It is important not to leave vaccination too late in case the baby is born earlier than expected.
- An important message to impart on mothers is "Protecting you baby against influenza starts when you are pregnant"

Can the Influenza vaccine be given during any trimester?

- Whilst pertussis vaccine is recommended to be given from 20 weeks gestation, influenza vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy.
- It is recommended that women be given influenza vaccination early in the influenza season, regardless of gestational age, however, they can be immunised at any time during pregnancy.
- It is never too late to vaccinate since influenza can circulate all year round. Vaccination should continue to be offered as long as influenza viruses are circulating and a valid vaccine is available.

Is Influenza vaccination safe at any stage of pregnancy?

- There is extensive evidence demonstrating the vaccine is safe for both mother and the baby when given during pregnancy.
- Common side effects from the influenza vaccine include mild pain, redness, or swelling at the injection site which last less than a few days and resolves without treatment. These side effects are no more common in pregnant women than in non-pregnant women.

Can a pregnant woman receive two influenza vaccines?

- Yes, it is safe for pregnant woman to receive two influenza vaccines.
- This might occur because a woman is vaccinated just before pregnancy and requires the same season vaccine whilst pregnant in order to protect the baby.
- This might also occur if the pregnancy overlaps two influenza seasons. She should receive each season's vaccine as it becomes available.