

# You, Pregnancy & **THE FLU**



**If you are pregnant, the flu is more dangerous for you.**

## **Why?**

- ▶ Changes in immune, heart and lung functions during pregnancy make you more likely to get seriously ill from the flu.
- ▶ Severe illness can be dangerous to your unborn baby because it increases the chance for serious problems such as premature labor and premature delivery.

To protect yourself from the flu (influenza), you need to get the flu shot.

## **Is the flu a serious disease?**

Yes. The seasonal or annual flu is a virus that affects the lungs, throat, nose, and other parts of the body. Unlike the common cold, the flu comes on suddenly, makes you very sick for a week or longer, and it can send you to the hospital.

When a sick person coughs or sneezes, tiny droplets fly through the air. You can get sick from the droplets if they land in your nose, eyes, or mouth. You can also get the flu by touching a surface, like a table or a doorknob, that has flu virus on it, then touching your mouth or nose.

You can get the flu from others even when they don't feel sick. Staying away from people who look sick is not enough to protect you.

Each year in the United States, nearly 24,000 people die from the flu.

## **Why should I get the flu shot?**

- ▶ To save your LIFE. Because you're pregnant, your risk of hospitalization or even death from the flu is higher than it is for most people.
- ▶ To help protect your baby from getting the flu for up to six months after he or she is born. Babies younger than six months can't get vaccinated against the flu.
- ▶ To save time and money. You will lose fewer days to sickness.

The flu vaccine is quick, easy and safe protection.



## Can the flu shot give me the flu?

No. This is not possible because the shot is made with only dead flu virus.

## Is the flu shot safe?

Yes. The flu shot is very safe; its benefits far outweigh any possible side effects. Some people may have redness and soreness where they received the shot, but other side effects are rare. Flu shots have not been shown to cause harm to pregnant women or their babies.

## Do I need to get a flu shot every year?

Yes. The flu virus changes every year, so the flu shot must change too. Because you are pregnant, you should be among the first to get your flu shot in the fall.

## Should my family and friends get a shot, too?

Yes. Everyone can get the flu. When the people around you get the flu shot they not only protect themselves, they are less likely to spread the flu to you and your baby. The flu shot is recommended for everyone six months and older.

## Should I get a whooping cough (pertussis) shot?

Yes. Whooping cough is a serious infection and can be life threatening for babies. The pertussis shot helps protect you from whooping cough and helps to protect your baby from getting whooping cough after he or she is born. You should get the pertussis shot each time you are pregnant.

## How do I get the seasonal flu and whooping cough shots?

Talk to your doctor, or contact your local health department.

## For more information about the flu shot, visit:

[www.health.ny.gov/flu](http://www.health.ny.gov/flu)

*Or, visit the New York State Department of Health's  
flu clinic locator during flu season.*



**Department  
of Health**