



The American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists
WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE PHYSICIANS

Physician Script on Influenza Immunization During Pregnancy

All women should receive the influenza vaccine; this is particularly important during pregnancy and the postpartum period. The influenza vaccination is an essential element of prenatal care because pregnant women are at an increased risk of serious illness and mortality due to influenza. In addition, maternal vaccination is the most effective strategy to protect newborns because the vaccine is not approved for use in infants younger than 6 months.

Only the inactivated influenza vaccine is recommended during pregnancy. Live, attenuated influenza vaccine, which is given as a nasal spray, is contraindicated for pregnant women. However, inadvertent administration of the live, attenuated influenza vaccine during pregnancy has not been shown to be harmful. The live, attenuated influenza vaccine is safe to administer postpartum and to family members.

It is safe for pregnant women to receive a vaccine with thimerosal. Thimerosal, a mercury-containing preservative used in multidose vials, has not been shown to cause any adverse effects except for occasional local skin reactions. There is no scientific evidence that thimerosal-containing vaccines cause adverse effects in children born to women who received vaccines with thimerosal. Some women may still be concerned; preservative free single-dose influenza vaccines are available from certain manufacturers.

It is required by law for you to give your patients a Vaccine Information Statement upon receiving an immunization. Vaccine Information Statement forms can be found in multiple languages at www.immunize.org/vis/.

Multiple studies show that the most effective way to increase your patient's vaccination acceptance rate is for you to directly recommend and provide the vaccine. Talk to your patients about the flu shot today. Here is a script for your consideration:

"I strongly recommend you get the flu shot today. I offer the influenza vaccine to all of my pregnant patients and to women who are considering becoming pregnant. The vaccine is safe and effective for pregnant women. The risks of getting sick with the flu are far greater for a pregnant woman and her baby than the possibility of having a complication from the vaccine. The flu shot will protect you as well as your baby in the first 6 months of life from getting the flu. Your family members who have contact with your newborn also should be vaccinated."

RESOURCES

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Immunization for women: seasonal influenza (flu) for ob-gyns. Available at: http://www.immunizationforwomen.org/immunization_facts/seasonal_influenza. Retrieved November 9, 2011.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Seasonal influenza: pregnant women and influenza (flu). Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>. Retrieved November 9, 2011.

Department of Health and Human Services. What pregnant women should know about flu. Available at: <http://www.flu.gov/individualfamily/parents/pregnant/index.html>. Retrieved November 9, 2011.