

# A Pregnant Woman's Guide to Preventing Seasonal Flu and H1N1 Flu (swine flu)



## What is H1N1 flu (swine flu)?

- The H1N1 flu is a new flu virus. Flu viruses spread when someone with the flu coughs or sneezes.
- Pregnant women can get very sick, be hospitalized, or even die from both H1N1 flu and seasonal flu.

## I am healthy. Should I be concerned?

- During a normal pregnancy, your lungs compress and your body's natural defenses weaken.
- Even healthy pregnant women and their babies are at risk for flu complications, like pneumonia.

## Are flu shots the best way to prevent the flu?

- Yes! Flu shots trigger your body to naturally build immunity to flu viruses.
- This year, you need 2 different flu shots to be best protected:
  - H1N1 flu shot
  - Seasonal flu shot
- The seasonal flu shot will not protect you from H1N1 flu. You need both shots.
- Pregnant women should get flu shots, not nasal-spray flu vaccine.
- You can get flu shots at any stage of pregnancy.

## Are flu shots safe for pregnant women and their unborn babies?

- Yes! Millions of people, including pregnant women, have safely gotten flu shots for many years.
- The H1N1 flu vaccine is made the same way seasonal flu vaccines are made each year.
- The most common side effects are tenderness and redness where the shot was given.
- Talk with your doctor if you have questions.

## How else can I keep healthy?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Eat healthy and get plenty of rest.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay away from sick people.

## How can I protect my newborn?

- The flu can be dangerous for newborns. However, only babies at least 6 months are old enough for the vaccine.
- Get flu shots during pregnancy. Some immunity you develop will pass on to your unborn baby. This will help protect your newborn.
- If you do not get flu shots during pregnancy, after delivery you and anyone who lives with or cares for your newborn should get both H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines.

Make an informed choice

**Talk with your doctor about two flu shots**

# Caring For Yourself If You Get Sick with the Flu



For many pregnant women, H1N1 flu will be mild. For some it can get worse quickly and complications can be serious, even fatal.

## Symptoms of H1N1 flu (swine flu)

The symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to seasonal flu. People may have all of these symptoms or just some (such as, just a fever and a cough):

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

## What should I do if I think I have the flu?

- Call your doctor right away.
- During pregnancy, treat a fever quickly with acetaminophen (Tylenol®). A high fever can be harmful to your unborn baby.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Stay home and have someone check on you.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash.

## What about antiviral medicines?

- Antiviral drugs fight flu viruses in your body and help treat the flu.
- If you are sick, or have close contact with someone with the flu, your doctor may prescribe an antiviral.
- You can take an antiviral while you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

## Go to the emergency room if you have any of these symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or belly
- Sudden dizziness or confusion
- Vomiting that is severe or goes on and on
- Less or no movements of your baby
- A high fever that does not go down with Tylenol®

## How can I protect my newborn if I get sick?

- Breast milk can help your new baby fight many infections, like the flu.
- If you have flu-like symptoms, to help protect your baby:
  - Be careful not to cough or sneeze into your baby's face.
  - Wash your hands often.
  - Wear a face mask while you breastfeed or care for your baby.
- Ask an adult who is not sick to help you.

## Want to Learn More?

[pregnancyshotsca.org](http://pregnancyshotsca.org)

[flu.gov](http://flu.gov)

[cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pregnancy](http://cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pregnancy)

[marchofdimes.com](http://marchofdimes.com)

If you get sick  
**Call your doctor right away**



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