

## Pregnancy and Flu

### What is flu?

Seasonal flu happens every year, usually in the winter. It's a highly infectious disease caused by a virus and spreads easily from person to person.

### What are the risks of flu to me and my baby?

Flu can cause serious illness in pregnant women and in the most severe cases can put the lives of expectant mums, and the lives of their unborn babies, in danger.

As a pregnant woman you are at increased risk of serious complications from flu. This is because your body and immune system are adapting to accommodate your growing baby and less able to fight off the flu virus.

### Why do pregnant women need the vaccine?

In recent years a number of pregnant women have fallen critically ill suffering from flu, and had to go to hospital for treatment. This can be prevented by having the vaccine. All pregnant women are offered a free injectable flu vaccine at any stage of pregnancy.

### Is the vaccine safe for pregnant women?

Yes – it is safe for you and your baby and can be given at any stage of pregnancy. The earlier you have the vaccine the better, as this means you will be protected for the whole winter. The vaccine will also give your unborn baby protection against flu during the first few months of life.

### How does the vaccine work?

There is NO live virus in the injectable flu vaccine. The vaccine works by tricking your immune system into thinking it has been infected with the flu virus so that it creates antibodies against it. About a week to ten days after you have had the flu vaccine, your body starts making antibodies to fight off what it thinks is a virus in the vaccine. If you are then exposed to the virus, your immune system will destroy the virus before it can cause any serious illness. The vaccine CANNOT give you the flu.

### Is there anyone who shouldn't have the vaccine?

If you have had a serious allergy to the vaccine in the past or have a serious allergy to hens' eggs you will not be able to have the vaccine. This type of allergy is extremely rare. Please make sure you discuss this with your GP or midwife beforehand

### When should I have the vaccine ?

As soon as possible. The vaccine is available free of charge from October to all pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy and will protect you and your baby throughout this year's flu season. It will also protect your baby from flu in their first few months of life.

### Where can I get the vaccine?

The vaccine is available from your local GP, maternity unit or pharmacy (participating pharmacies only). Please don't wait until there is a flu outbreak this winter - talk to your midwife or GP today for more information.

**Please don't delay - get the flu vaccine today to protect yourself and your baby**