

Influenza vaccination in pregnancy

This CBR is developed to guide clinical practice at the Royal Hospital for Women. Individual patient circumstances may mean that practice diverges from this CBR

1. AIM

- Appropriate vaccination of pregnant woman to minimise influenza infection

2. PATIENT

- Pregnant woman

3. STAFF

- Medical, nursing and midwifery staff

4. EQUIPMENT

- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Alcohol hand rub
- Band-Aid®
- Sharps receptacle
- Alcohol wipe

5. CLINICAL PRACTICE

Preconception and Antenatal

- Recommend influenza vaccination for a woman planning pregnancy and any pregnant woman regardless of gestation
- Recommend vaccination anytime in the influenza season
- Discuss with woman options for obtaining vaccination at general practitioner (GP), antenatal clinic or when attending hospital

Administration guide:

- Discuss with the woman the reason for the influenza vaccination, as well as the possible side-effects (see educational notes)
- Provide the woman with the factsheet (see appendix 1)
- Complete Maternity dTpa/Influenza Pre-vaccination checklist
- Determine whether any contra-indications for vaccination exist (see educational notes)
- Gain verbal consent for the vaccination and document same in medical record
- Gently agitate the vaccine prior to administration and visually inspect for particulate matter. If particles remain the vaccine should not be administered and discarded
- Administer vaccine as an intramuscular injection into the upper arm as a single dose only
- Observe for severe/immediate side effects for 15 minutes. Severe side effects should be reported to the Public Health Unit for investigation (Randwick office 9382 8333)
- Document in medical record and on antenatal card, consent, vaccine brand, dose, batch, route and site of administration, date, name, and signature of vaccinator. This is to be recorded in *Considerations* folder in eMaternity under *Flu immunisation given*
- Report any adverse events following immunisation if required (see educational notes)

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- Ensure that the administering nurse or midwife is competent to administer the drug and electronically sign off the administration of it on the electronic medication chart. This order must be checked and signed by a medical officer within 24 hours of activation of the standing order. Alternatively the vaccination can be ordered on a paper medication chart by a medical officer before administration

6. DOCUMENTATION

- Antenatal Card
- Medical record
- Maternity dTpa/Influenza Pre-Vaccination Check list – SMR060.480

7. EDUCATIONAL NOTES

- Influenza vaccination is recommended for any person who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with influenza, including family members of the pregnant woman
- Free influenza vaccine is available for all pregnant women. To receive influenza vaccination women may visit their local doctor or Immunisation provider or attend the antenatal clinic. It is important to note that the vaccine is free with pharmacists or GP, however a consultation fee may apply (for GP).
- Pregnant women are at high risk of severe consequences of influenza infection. The influenza vaccine is safe for pregnant women and provides protection for themselves and their newborn baby for the first six months after birth¹
- Women travelling overseas during pregnancy regardless of season should seek advice on vaccination or regarding vaccination upon arrival at their destination⁴
- Influenza vaccination during pregnancy should be routine. Safety is well established and both maternal and infant benefit is now proven with only 5 vaccination doses estimated to prevent one case of serious maternal or infant respiratory illness¹
- People with egg allergies or sensitivities can be safely administered the influenza vaccination. See precautions below for further detail.
- Any severe adverse events following Immunisation should be reported via TGA website, [Reporting and managing adverse vaccination events | Australian Government Department of Health](#) to fill in the National Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI) reporting form
- If women are undecided and require further information, they can be directed to MumBubVax⁸ [MumBubVax](#) or Sharing Knowledge About Immunisation (SKAI)⁷ to get unbiased information to help inform their decision [Home | Sharing Knowledge about Immunisation | SKAI \(talkingaboutimmunisation.org.au\)](#)

Side effects

- The most common side effect is minor pain, swelling, itching and redness around the injection site. These side effects are mild and usually clear up within a few days²
- Anaphylaxis is rare, but can occur with all vaccines and medications²

Precautions

- People with egg allergies/anaphylaxis can be safely administered the influenza vaccination. All influenza vaccines currently available in Australia contain traces of egg protein. Once purified the amount of residual egg ovalbumin present in each vaccine dose is usually ≤ 1.0 microgram. This is substantially less than the amount of egg protein that is likely to trigger reactions in people with egg allergy, which is estimated at 130 micrograms taken orally.

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However, as a low risk of anaphylaxis is present, ensure vaccination is administered by staff with the knowledge and facilities to manage such a reaction⁵

- Immunocompromised patients receiving influenza vaccine for the first time should be referred to their specialist physician⁶
- Vaccination must be postponed in women who have febrile illness ($\geq 38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$) or acute infection^{1,2}
- Women with a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome with onset related in time to influenza vaccination may be at increased risk of again developing Guillain-Barre Syndrome if given influenza vaccine. Refer for medical assessment

Contraindications

- Anaphylaxis after a previous dose of any influenza vaccine², or
- Anaphylaxis after a previous dose of any vaccine component such as Neomycin or Polymyxin²

8. RELATED POLICIES / PROCEDURES / GUIDELINES

- HIV in pregnancy
- Maternal Collapse
- Influenza vaccination in pregnancy – standing order
- Occupational Assessment, Screening and Vaccination against Specified Infectious Diseases. NSW Ministry of Health PD2020_017
- Medication Handling in NSW public health facilities PD2013_043
- Mothersafe – NSW Medications in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Service. Influenza Vaccine in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding 2019

9. RISK RATING

- Extreme

10. National Standards

- Standard 2 - Partnering with Consumers
- Standard 3 - Preventing and Controlling Healthcare Associated Infections
- Standard 4 – Medication Safety
- Standard 5 – Comprehensive Care

11. REFERENCES

1. RANZCOG. 2017. Influenza vaccination during pregnancy (and in women planning pregnancy)
2. Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). Australian Immunisation Handbook, Australian Government Department of Health, Canberra. 2018. [The Australian Immunisation Handbook \(health.gov.au\)](http://www.health.gov.au)
3. Vaccination recommendations for the 2015 influenza season Published in *Health News and Evidence* Date published: 25 March 2015 <http://www.nps.org.au/publications/health-professional/health-news-evidence/2015/2015-fluvax-recommendations>
4. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, ACIP recommendations and pregnancy (Flu) 2021

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5. Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and allergy (ASCIA). 2020. Egg allergy and Influenza Vaccination [Egg allergy flu vaccine - Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy \(ASCIA\)](#)
6. Pregnant women and influenza. NSW Health 2022. [Pregnant women and influenza - Influenza \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
7. Sharing Knowledge About Immunisation (SKAI). 2021. Talking about Immunisation [Home | Sharing Knowledge about Immunisation | SKAI \(talkingaboutimmunisation.org.au\)](#)
8. MumBubVax. [MumBubVax](#) 2020. Talking About immunisation for mothers and babies. Murdoch Children's Research Institute

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PROTECTING YOUR BABY AGAINST INFLUENZA STARTS WHEN YOU ARE PREGNANT

What is influenza?

Influenza is a highly infectious viral infection that spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Influenza can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications, including pneumonia, heart and other organ damage.

Influenza is a serious disease for pregnant women and their babies

- Changes to your immune, heart and lung functions during pregnancy make you more vulnerable to severe illness from influenza.
- Even healthy women with an uncomplicated pregnancy can develop life-threatening influenza. Other complications can include premature labour or stillbirth.
- 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.

Influenza vaccination in pregnancy gives protection to your baby

- The best way to protect your newborn baby against influenza is to get vaccinated during pregnancy.
- By getting vaccinated, you pass on protective antibodies to your baby through the placenta which protects them in their first few months of life, when they are most vulnerable and too young to have the influenza vaccine themselves.
- Getting vaccinated against influenza during pregnancy also reduces your chances of experiencing stillbirth and other complications that can harm your developing baby.

Influenza vaccination is safe at any stage of pregnancy

- There is extensive evidence demonstrating the safety of the influenza vaccine in pregnant women. Studies of women vaccinated in pregnancy have found no evidence that the influenza vaccine harms their developing babies.
- Common side effects from the influenza vaccine can include mild pain, redness, or swelling where the vaccine is given which last less than a few days and disappear without treatment. These side effects are no more common in pregnant women than in non-pregnant women.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Is the influenza vaccine free for pregnant women?

Yes. The vaccine is free for pregnant women through the National Immunisation Program.

Q: When should pregnant women get vaccinated?

The influenza vaccine can safely be given at any stage during pregnancy. It is best given before the influenza season starts. However, it can be given at any time during the year, and it will still provide some protection to both mother and baby.

Q: Do I need to be vaccinated again if I was vaccinated last winter?

Yes. Every year the influenza vaccine is changed to protect against the types of influenza that are expected to be most common that year.

Q: What other vaccinations are recommended during pregnancy?

The whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine is also free for pregnant women through the National Immunisation Program. It is safe and provides protection for pregnant women and their babies.

Managing influenza

Influenza is not the same as the common cold. Although some of the symptoms are similar, some people can become seriously ill. Influenza is an illness that usually lasts for 5–7 days or more

What are the symptoms of influenza?

Usually sudden onset of:

- fever (high temperature)
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)

What if I get influenza?

Your GP can advise you on treatment options, but day to day advice includes:

- covering your mouth when coughing/sneezing and washing your hands before touching your baby
- if breastfeeding, continuing to do so but avoid coughing/sneezing near your baby. Consider wearing a mask.
- manage your temperature and muscle aches with paracetamol

What if someone in my family gets influenza?

- keep them away from the baby if possible
- make sure they cover their mouths when coughing/sneezing
- consider wearing a mask
- wash their hands before touching the baby.

What if my baby gets symptoms that I am concerned could be influenza?

- if breastfeeding, continue to do so
- seek medical attention if you are concerned
- keep your baby away from other people, especially other babies, children, older people, pregnant women, and people with medical conditions.

Where can I get more information?

Speak to your immunisation provider OR



LOCAL OPERATING PROCEDURE

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[Immunisation for pregnancy | Australian Government Department of Health](#) OR
[MumBubVax](#)

Australian Government Department of Health
National Immunisation Program
A joint Australian, State and Territory Government Initiative