



Bundesinstitut für
Öffentliche Gesundheit

ROBERT KOCH INSTITUT



Flu Vaccines

Vaccinations during pregnancy –
Protection for parent and child



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Wissen, was schützt.

Why is it important to have the flu vaccine if you are pregnant?

People who are pregnant are at increased risk of becoming seriously ill with flu. Catching flu during pregnancy can also lead to growth retardation, miscarriage or premature birth. The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) therefore recommends that anybody who is pregnant during the flu season is vaccinated.

What is flu and what symptoms might you experience?

Flu (influenza) is an infectious disease caused by flu viruses. Flu can be **severe or even life-threatening** and may result in complications. Around 2 out of 3 people develop symptoms after being infected with flu. These symptoms usually start suddenly, approximately one to two days after infection.

Typical symptoms include:

- ▶ high temperature (fever)
- ▶ dry cough
- ▶ bad headaches and aching limbs
- ▶ general sensation of being ill and tired

Every third person will not experience symptoms once they are infected, but can still infect other people.

How can you become infected with a flu virus?



Flu viruses are mainly transmitted **by droplets when coughing, sneezing or talking**. If droplets that carry the flu virus come into contact with the mucous membranes of the nose, mouth or eyes, then you can become infected.



It is also possible to transmit flu viruses on **the hands or shared surfaces**, such as door handles.

You can still catch the flu even if you have had a flu vaccine.

Why is it dangerous to catch flu if you're pregnant?

During pregnancy, the immune system becomes less active so that it does not attack the unborn child as a foreign body. This means that people who are pregnant are more susceptible to various infections. People who are pregnant have an increased risk of developing serious complications such as pneumonia, having a miscarriage or giving birth to a premature baby. The unborn child can also be affected by the infection.

There are limited treatment options available during pregnancy

Any medication that is prescribed during pregnancy must be carefully considered. The primary focus is on the healthy development of the child and the safety of the mother. It is only possible to administer antiviral flu medication during pregnancy after undertaking a stringent assessment of each individual case. Antibiotics are not effective against viral diseases such as flu. They are only used if a bacterial infection is also present.

Flu vaccines provide protection for both the parent and child against the dangers of a serious illness.

From which month of pregnancy is it recommended to be vaccinated?

The flu vaccination should be given from the **4th month of the pregnancy** if the person is pregnant during the flu season. People who are pregnant and who also suffer from chronic illnesses such as asthma, diabetes or high blood pressure should be vaccinated at an earlier stage.

At what point should you be vaccinated if you are pregnant?

The best time to get the flu vaccine is **from October to mid-December**. It can also be useful to be vaccinated at a later stage.

Since flu viruses are constantly changing, the vaccines are therefore adapted every year. The vaccines contain ingredients of the different viral variants that are most frequently and most likely to be found over the coming season.



Double protection

If you are vaccinated while pregnant, this also protects the child after birth. During pregnancy, antibodies are transferred to the child via the placenta. These provide a certain level of protection against flu during the first few months of life (which is known as nest protection).

For people who are pregnant, statutory health insurance covers the costs of the flu vaccination.

Is it recommended to have additional vaccinations during pregnancy?

The STIKO also recommends that people who are pregnant are adequately **protected against Covid-19**. If the person does not have basic immunity or any corresponding pre-existing conditions, it is possible to catch up with Covid-19 vaccinations from the second month of pregnancy. It is possible to receive the flu and Covid-19 vaccinations at the same appointment.

All people who are pregnant should also be given vaccines to protect against **whooping cough (pertussis)** during their last trimester.

Is it safe to have the flu vaccine if you are pregnant?

The flu vaccine is **well tolerated and safe**. After being vaccinated, you may experience some of the usual reactions to having a vaccine, such as pain at the injection site, tiredness or a slight feeling of being ill. These symptoms usually go away after one or two days. Severe side effects are very rare.



The safety of having a flu vaccine for both parent and child has been proven by various studies: the vaccine is well tolerated by people who are pregnant and it does not raise their risk of giving birth prematurely or having a caesarean section. There is also no negative impact on the health of the baby after birth.

How else can you help to protect yourself?

Having a flu vaccine means you will be well protected against severe symptoms of the illness. However, it does not offer complete protection. By following **simple hygiene measures**, you can protect both yourself and other people from flu viruses and other infectious respiratory diseases.

Important hygiene tips



Keep your distance



Pay attention to hygiene when coughing and sneezing



Thoroughly ventilate spaces on a regular basis



Wash your hands regularly as part of your everyday routine



Cover your mouth and nose with a mask if necessary



Avoid contact with others



Stay at home if you are unwell



Keep your hands away from your face

You can read more information about flu and how you can protect yourself at www.infektionsschutz.de and www.rki.de/influenza-impfung.

Imprint

Publisher: Federal Institute of Public Health (BIÖG),
50819 Cologne.

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Robert Koch Institute (RKI).

Editorial office: Federal Institute of Public Health,
Infection Protection, Risk and Crisis Management

Design: VALID Digitalagentur GmbH

Image credits: © SrdjanPav | Getty Images

Item number: D81000514

As of: April 2025



Further information about the flu vaccination during pregnancy: www.infektionsschutz.de/impfen/fuer-schwangere/grippe-impfung-bei-schwangeren

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