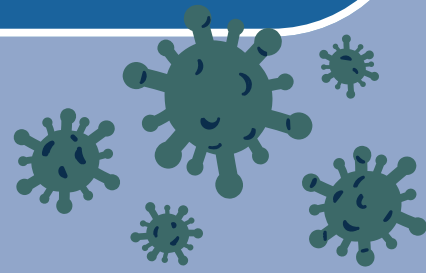


Seasonal Flu: Pregnancy and Breastfeeding



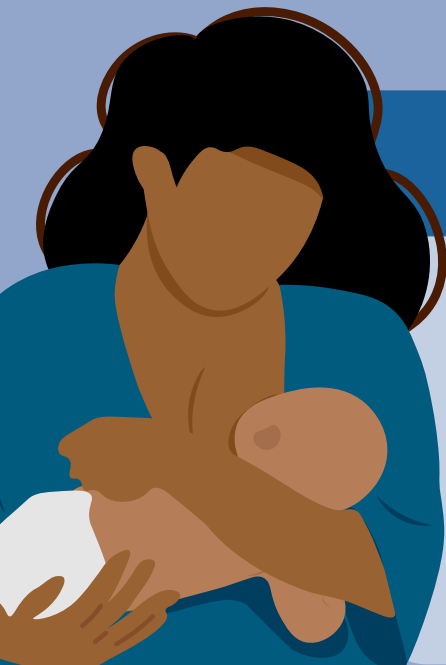
What is the flu?

Influenza (flu) is a respiratory disease that causes fever, cough, muscle aches, and pains. Common symptoms include headache, chills, tiredness, loss of appetite, sore throat, and runny nose. The World Health Organization and the Public Health Agency of Canada recommend that all people who are pregnant get the flu vaccine.



Why is the flu vaccine important during pregnancy?

- If you are pregnant, you are at higher risk for getting the flu and being sicker.
- Being vaccinated during pregnancy will not only protect your health, but also the health of the fetus and your newborn.
- Babies under six months can be protected against the flu if their mom was vaccinated during pregnancy. Babies older than six months can get the flu vaccine.



Breastfeeding and breastmilk protect babies from the flu

- If you are breastfeeding, you should get the flu vaccine every year.
- Breastmilk contains antibodies and other substances that will help your baby fight off infections.

How to protect you and your baby from the flu



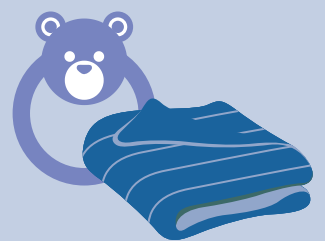
Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. If that's not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Do not use hand sanitizer on your baby as their skin is still developing and they often put their hands in their mouths.



Use clean tissues to cover your nose or mouth when coughing or sneezing. Discard the tissue immediately after use.



Ask family and friends to delay visiting if they feel unwell (cough, fever, etc.). Avoid taking your infant out into crowds.



Keep your baby's items such as teething rings, blankets, and burp cloths clean as they can spread flu viruses when soiled.



Seasonal Flu: Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

FAQ

Can I continue to breastfeed if I have the flu?



Yes. A mother's breastmilk contains antibodies and other immune boosting factors that help protect the baby from the flu. It is also the recommended source of nutrition for the infant, even while the mother is ill. Continue to wash hands with soap and water regularly and follow other protocols such as wearing a mask if needed and keeping items clean.

Can I continue to breastfeed if I am receiving anti-viral treatment?



Yes. Breastfeeding should continue if you are taking anti-viral treatments such as Tamiflu (oseltamivir) as this medication is considered safe while breastfeeding. Low dosages of anti-viral medications may be passed to the baby through breastmilk but are not shown to be harmful. Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen used to treat fever and muscle aches are also safe for breastfeeding parents to use.

What if I am too sick to breastfeed?



If you are too sick to breastfeed, your breastmilk can be expressed and provided by a caregiver using a cup, spoon, and/or syringe. Keep up your milk supply by regularly removing milk from your breasts by pumping or using hand expression. Call your public health nurse or family doctor if you need advice.

Can I breastfeed if my baby has the flu?

Yes. Keep breastfeeding if your baby becomes ill with the flu. Sick babies may need to breastfeed more often to increase their fluid intake. Continued breastfeeding may also help reduce the severity of your baby's respiratory symptoms. Have your baby seen by a health care provider if the baby is sick and having trouble breathing or breastfeeding.

