

# 2019 vaccination during pregnancy

a guide for healthcare professionals



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## Be an Advocate for Vaccination

GPs, obstetricians and midwives play a key role in having fact-based conversations with pregnant women to discuss the benefits and concerns, as well as the best timing of the vaccine.

Influenza and whooping cough (pertussis) are serious illnesses that can affect both mother and baby. Influenza and whooping cough vaccination can help keep mothers and babies healthy and protect the newborn in the first 6 months of life.

92%

92% of women would accept vaccination if they knew it was nationally approved and free, and offered by a midwife or GP during pregnancy.

86% of pregnant women believe they should be vaccinated when pregnant.

86%



Women **not** vaccinated during pregnancy should be vaccinated as soon as possible after delivery.

## Whooping Cough Vaccination During Pregnancy

Whooping cough is a highly infectious bacterial disease that causes severe bouts of coughing. In adults, the symptoms can be mild, but for a baby who is not yet vaccinated, it can be life threatening.

Vaccination during pregnancy (preferably at 28 weeks) means the body produces antibodies that are passed on to the baby before birth.

These antibodies will protect the baby until they are able to receive their own vaccination at 6 weeks of age.



Studies have found that whooping cough vaccination during pregnancy is safe and effective for both mother and baby.

Studies from the US and UK involving more than 40,000 pregnant women found only mild side effects such as pain or redness in the arm where the vaccination was given. It does not increase the risk of serious pregnancy complications such as premature birth. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has recently updated recommendations for pregnant women to be vaccinated in their third trimester.

## What You Need to Know



The whooping cough vaccine (dTpa) is nationally approved and free for pregnant women.



dTpa vaccine is recommended during the 3rd trimester of each pregnancy. Optimal time is between 28-32 weeks but can be given at any time in the third trimester.



Studies show **no increased** risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes related to pertussis vaccination during pregnancy, such as stillbirth, foetal distress or low birth weight.



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## Influenza Vaccination During Pregnancy

Influenza is a potentially severe disease that can affect mother and baby. It can affect the mother in the second and third trimesters and the baby in the first few months after birth, even causing death. In Australia up to 3500 people die every year of influenza and tens of thousands are hospitalised due to influenza and its complications. Pregnant women bear a disproportionate burden from influenza infection.

In 2009 5% of influenza deaths were in pregnant women despite them only representing 1% of the population. Amongst pregnant women with confirmed influenza, the risk of foetal death is almost doubled. This may be because the immune system is naturally suppressed during pregnancy which leads to an increased chance of contracting influenza. Additionally, pregnant women have an increased risk of severe complications: stillbirth, premature birth and suboptimal foetal growth. Influenza vaccination protects against these three complications.

Although vaccination rates have recently increased, pregnant women seem to underestimate the risk to the unborn baby – especially from influenza. Not enough mums understand that the baby cannot be vaccinated against influenza in the first 6 months of life.

### What You Need to Know

 The influenza vaccine is nationally approved and free for pregnant women.

 The vaccine is the best way to protect the mother and baby.

 Multiple studies show that influenza vaccine at any stage of pregnancy is associated with a 20% reduction in risk of stillbirth.

### Vaccinating pregnant women against influenza gives a three for one benefit:

 Protects the mum during pregnancy and in the early months of motherhood

 Protects the unborn baby by transplacental antibodies

 Protects the young infant by antibodies in breast milk

