

Are the influenza and whooping cough vaccines safe?

Yes. The influenza vaccine has been given safely to millions of pregnant women worldwide over many years. Since 2012, WA Health has followed up more than 9000 women who were vaccinated against influenza and/or whooping cough during pregnancy, with no serious adverse effects reported.

Childhood immunisations

As a parent, immunisation is one of the best ways to protect your child from several harmful diseases.

During the first few years of your child's life, they will need vaccinations to protect them against the most serious childhood infections. Luckily, most parents in Australia will never see or experience the devastating consequences that vaccine-preventable infections can have on a family or community.

However, it is important to protect your child with vaccines because outbreaks of vaccine-preventable infections can and occasionally do occur in this country.

When does my child need to be immunised?

Getting your baby immunised at the right time is important for maximum protection against the 16 diseases on the National Immunisation Program.

Your baby should receive their first immunisation, hepatitis B, before going home from hospital. They should then be immunised again at 6–8 weeks, 4, 6, 12 and 18 months, and at 4 years of age.

How can I keep track of my child's vaccinations?

- Visit healthywa.wa.gov.au/childhoodimmunisation
- Follow the immunisation schedule visits in your child's health record (purple book)
- Speak to your GP or immunisation provider about when your child is next due for their immunisations.

Who else can be vaccinated to protect my baby?

People who will be in close contact with your baby, such as siblings and grandparents, should also be vaccinated against influenza and whooping cough.

This is known as 'cocooning' and will reduce the chance of these infections being passed on to your baby. This is especially important if your baby has other risk factors such as a weakened immune system.

Influenza

Children from 6 months of age and other people living in the same house as your baby should get the influenza vaccine each year to reduce the chance of spreading the virus.

Whooping cough

Around 80 per cent of babies with whooping cough get the infection from a parent or sibling.

Close adult contacts who haven't had a whooping cough vaccine in the past 10 years, should receive a booster dose.

It's also important siblings are up-to-date with their childhood vaccines.



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Immunisation for pregnant women



Immunisation is one of the most effective ways to keep you and your baby healthy by protecting against harmful infections.

Influenza and whooping cough vaccines are recommended and free for pregnant women.

Pregnancy is also a good time to learn about vaccines your baby can have after birth.

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Vaccines for pregnant women

It is recommended pregnant women receive the whooping cough (pertussis) and flu (influenza) vaccines during each pregnancy to protect themselves and their babies. These vaccines are free for pregnant women.

Whooping cough (pertussis)

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a highly infectious bacterial disease that is easily spread by coughing and sneezing. It affects the lungs and airways causing uncontrollable coughing and difficulty breathing.

Parents are a common source of whooping cough infection for babies

In their first few months of life, your baby is at greatest risk of catching whooping cough and having severe, potentially life-threatening complications from the infection including breathing problems, pneumonia, brain damage and sometimes death. However, babies under 6 weeks cannot get the whooping cough vaccine because their immune system is not developed enough. If you are immunised while pregnant, this will reduce your chance of getting sick and infecting your baby.

How does the whooping cough vaccine work?

After receiving the whooping cough vaccine, your body makes protective antibodies (proteins produced by the body to fight diseases). By getting immunised during pregnancy, you will pass protective antibodies through your placenta to your baby.

Studies show whooping cough vaccination during pregnancy reduces whooping cough in babies less than 3 months of age by over 90 per cent.

When is the best time to get the whooping cough vaccine?

To give your baby optimal protection when they are born, you should get immunised during the second or third trimester, ideally between 20 to 32 weeks of pregnancy. You will need a whooping cough vaccine for every pregnancy because your immunity will wane over time.

After your baby is born

Your baby should start a course of whooping cough vaccines when they are between 6 and 8 weeks of age to ensure ongoing protection.

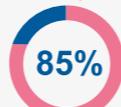
Whooping cough

Whooping cough is easily transmitted by infected droplets in the air from coughing and sneezing

85% of unimmunised people who come in contact with someone who has whooping cough will get it

1 in 200 babies who get whooping cough die from it

4/5 of women in WA received a whooping cough vaccine in their last pregnancy



Influenza

Pregnant women who get influenza are at higher risk of hospitalisation, and even death, than non-pregnant women

1500 Australian children under 5 are hospitalised with influenza each year

Babies are 25% less likely to be hospitalised from influenza-related illness if their mums are immunised against flu while pregnant

Risk of stillbirth is reduced by 51% in pregnant women who are immunised against influenza

55% of pregnant women in WA received an influenza vaccine in their last pregnancy



Don't put yourself or your baby at risk. Get the influenza and whooping cough vaccines today.

Sources:

1. Regan AK, Moore HC, de Klerk N, Omer SB, Shellam G, Mak DB, Effler PV. Seasonal trivalent influenza vaccination during pregnancy and the incidence of stillbirth: population-based retrospective cohort study. Clin Infect Dis 2016
2. Influenza Specialist Group, Influenza in children, www.isg.org.au
3. Immunise Australia Program, Whooping cough (pertussis), www.health.wa.gov.au



GET VACCINATED



COVER COUGHS



WASH HANDS



CLEAN SURFACES



STAY AT HOME

Influenza (flu)

Influenza, commonly known as flu, is caused by the influenza virus. It is easily spread by coughing or sneezing, or by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your mouth or nose.

Symptoms may include sudden onset of fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, severe tiredness and loss of appetite. Complications may include pneumonia, worsening of other illnesses and death.

Why is it so important for pregnant women to get the influenza vaccine?

Pregnant women who get the influenza are at higher risk of hospitalisation, and even death, than non-pregnant women. Severe illness during pregnancy can also increase the chance of serious problems such as premature labour and birth. Research shows the risk of stillbirth is reduced by 51 per cent in pregnant women who are immunised against influenza.

If I am immunised, will my baby be protected too?

Yes. When you are immunised against influenza, your body makes antibodies that help protect you against influenza. These pass through your placenta to protect your unborn baby for up to 6 months after birth. This is important because babies younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious, potentially life-threatening complications from influenza, but their immune systems are not yet developed enough to be immunised against influenza themselves.

When is the best time to get the influenza vaccine?

You can get the influenza vaccine at any stage of pregnancy. However, this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic it is advised to get the influenza vaccine as soon as it is available.

Why do I need the influenza vaccine every year?

Influenza viruses change quickly, so a vaccine from a previous year may not protect you and your baby against the viruses circulating in the community now. The best protection is to be immunised with the most current influenza vaccine while pregnant.