



Can I have the influenza vaccine and whooping cough vaccine at the same time?

Yes. You can get the influenza vaccine and whooping cough vaccine at the same time. You can also get them at different visits.

Where can I get vaccinated?

You can get vaccinated at your GP or antenatal clinic.

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.

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 vaccinations.



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Immunisation for pregnant women

Get your free influenza and whooping cough vaccines

Vaccines for pregnant women

Pregnant women and newborns are more at risk of becoming seriously ill from influenza and whooping cough.

Vaccination not only protects you now, but also your baby for their first weeks of life when they are too young to be vaccinated themselves. 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) vaccine

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.

Why is it so important to get the whooping cough vaccine?

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.

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

After receiving the whooping cough vaccine, your body makes protective antibodies (proteins produced by the body to fight diseases). Your immunity will be passed on to your baby as the antibodies pass through the placenta.

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

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.

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

To give your baby optimal protection when they are born, you should get vaccinated 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.



Sources:

- 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
- Influenza Specialist Group, Influenza in children, isg.org.au
- Immunise Australia Program, Whooping cough (pertussis), health.wa.gov.au
- Western Australias Mothers and Babies summary information, health.wa.gov.au

Influenza (flu) vaccine

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 to get the influenza vaccine?

Pregnant women who get 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?

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, 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.

After your baby is born

Babies can get an annual influenza vaccine from 6 months of age.