



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Shots for Expectant Moms

Influenza and Tdap Vaccination Coverage Among Pregnant Women — United States, April 2018

Recorded: September 25, 2018; posted: September 27, 2018

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Dooling] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Kathleen Dooling.

For an expectant mother, taking care of her developing baby means taking good care of herself. One way she can do this is by ensuring she gets vaccinated.

Katherine Kahn is with CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of women getting all recommended vaccines during pregnancy. Welcome to the show, Katherine.

[Katherine Kahn] Thank you.

[Dr. Dooling] Katherine, what vaccines are recommended for pregnant women?

[Katherine Kahn] We routinely recommend that women get whooping cough and flu vaccines during every pregnancy. When pregnant women get these vaccines, they aren't just protecting themselves, they're giving their baby some early protection too, before they're old enough to get their own vaccinations.

[Dr. Dooling] At what point during pregnancy should a woman get these vaccines?

[Katherine Kahn] It's important for women to get the whooping cough vaccine, also called Tdap, in the third trimester of every pregnancy. It's safe for women to get a flu shot at any time before, during, or after pregnancy. However, getting vaccinated before or during pregnancy is recommended, and we recommend getting a flu shot before late October, if possible. Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent both of these diseases.

[Dr. Dooling] What are the health risks to mom and baby if the mother is not fully vaccinated?

[Katherine Kahn] Flu is more likely to cause severe illness in pregnant women than in women the same age who are not pregnant. Changes in the immune system, heart and lungs, during pregnancy make pregnant women and new moms more prone to severe illness from flu, including illness resulting in hospitalization. Flu may also be harmful in a pregnant woman's developing baby and can potentially cause severe complications in children, leading to hospitalization and even death in young children. As with any adult, whooping cough can cause a pregnant woman to cough for weeks or even months. She could cough so hard that she passes out or fractures her rib. Whooping cough can cause a baby to have coughing fits, gasp for air, and turn blue from a lack of oxygen. Babies who get whooping cough can also die from the

infection. Both vaccines help the body to create protective antibodies and pass some of them on to the baby before birth. These antibodies will provide the baby with some short term early protection against flu and whooping cough.

[Dr. Dooling] Are these vaccines safe for the unborn baby?

[Katherine Kahn] Both vaccines have very good safety records. In fact, it's the diseases that can cause harm to the mother and her baby.

[Dr. Dooling] What's the best way for pregnant women to make sure they get all recommended vaccines?

[Katherine Kahn] They can ask their OB-GYN or mid-wife about the vaccines they need when pregnant. A doctor, nurse, mid-wife, PA, or pharmacist can all give the vaccines pregnant women need.

[Dr. Dooling] Where can listeners get more information about vaccines during pregnancy?

[Katherine Kahn] Listeners can go to [cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy).

[Dr. Dooling] Thanks, Katherine. I've been talking today with Katherine Kahn about the importance of ensuring pregnant women are fully vaccinated.

Failure to get vaccinated places both mother and baby at increased risk for serious complications of these infections, including hospitalization and even death. If you're pregnant or planning to get pregnant, ask your health care provider when you should get your vaccines.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Kathleen Dooling for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.