



## **A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC**

### *Preventing Flu During Pregnancy*

*Influenza Vaccination Coverage Among Pregnant Women – United States, 2012-13 Influenza Season*

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

[Dr. Gaynes] 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. Robert Gaynes.

During the influenza season pregnant women and infants under 6 months old are especially susceptible to severe complications from the flu.

Dr. Stacie Greby is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of pregnant women receiving the flu vaccine. Welcome to the show, Stacie.

[Dr. Greby] Thank you for inviting me Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Stacie, why are pregnant women at increased risk for severe complications from the flu?

[Dr. Greby] Pregnancy causes changes in a woman's immune system, heart, and lungs. These changes increase the risk of severe complications from the flu throughout pregnancy and even immediately after delivery.

[Dr. Gaynes] What effect can flu have on the unborn baby?

[Dr. Greby] Since pregnant women are more likely to become severely ill with the flu they can have a greater chance for serious problems during their pregnancy including premature labor and delivery which can affect their child.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is the best way for pregnant women to avoid getting the flu?

[Dr. Greby] Pregnant women should get a flu shot. It not only protects them, it protects their unborn child and can protect their newborn child as well, especially since a baby

less than six months of age cannot be vaccinated. Unfortunately, only half of pregnant women chose to get a shot during the last flu season.

[Dr. Gaynes] Stacie, why aren't many pregnant women getting vaccinated?

[Dr. Greby] There are three common misconceptions about the flu vaccination among pregnant women. First, that vaccination is not safe for the baby. Second, vaccination can cause flu. And the last misconception is the vaccination is not effective. The main reason to be vaccinated is to protect the baby. Here's what I want pregnant women to remember; there are more risks to the woman and the baby from getting the flu than from the flu shot.

[Dr. Gaynes] Can a woman be vaccinated at any point during pregnancy?

[Dr. Greby] Absolutely. Pregnant women can get the flu shot at any time during the pregnancy before and during the flu season. Pregnant women should be sure to get the flu shot and not the nasal spray. If they were not vaccinated during the pregnancy, they should receive the flu vaccination as soon as possible after deliver to protect them and their babies from the flu. The vaccine can be given to breastfeeding mothers as well.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about getting the flu vaccine during pregnancy?

[Dr. Greby] At [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu).

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Stacie. [PAUSE]

I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Stacie Greby about the importance of pregnant women receiving the flu vaccine.

Remember, the flu vaccine is safe and effective. It can be given at any time during pregnancy or immediately after delivery, even if the mother is breastfeeding her baby.

Women, who are pregnant or could become pregnant, should talk with their healthcare provider about the benefits of flu vaccination.

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

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