

Antiviral Medications for Treatment of 2009 H1N1 Influenza and Pregnancy

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Hello, my name is Dr. Sonja Rasmussen. The topic: Antiviral Medications for Treatment of 2009 H1N1 Influenza and Pregnancy.

Based on information from previous influenza pandemics, seasonal influenza, and from the current 2009 H1N1 influenza outbreak, pregnant women are at increased risk for severe complications and death from influenza. Postpartum women should also be considered at increased risk of influenza-related complications for up to two weeks following delivery, including following a pregnancy loss.

For these reasons, empiric treatment with antiviral medications is recommended for pregnant and postpartum women with confirmed or suspected influenza. At the present time, nearly all circulating influenza viruses are 2009 H1N1 viruses that are susceptible to both oseltamivir, or Tamiflu, and zanamivir, or Relenza. Pregnancy should not be considered a contraindication to the use of these medications. These medications are "FDA Pregnancy Category C," meaning that no clinical studies have been conducted to assess their safety in pregnancy. However, the available data on benefits and potential risks indicate pregnant women with suspected or confirmed influenza should receive prompt antiviral therapy.

Oseltamivir is currently preferred for treatment of pregnant or postpartum women because of its systemic absorption. Treatment should be initiated as early as possible because studies show that treatment initiated early is more likely to provide benefit. Treatment should not wait for laboratory confirmation because testing can delay treatment and because a negative rapid test for influenza does not rule it out. Pregnant or postpartum women should be advised to call their healthcare provider immediately if they develop symptoms of influenza. Because of the risk that it appears to pose to the fetus, fever in pregnant women should be treated with acetaminophen.

Thank you.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.