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Influenza Vaccination Among Pregnant and Postpartum Women in Washington: The Importance of the Prenatal Care Provider

Providers can make a big difference in flu vaccination among pregnant women.

"I was surprised my doctor didn't talk to me about... flu vaccinations."

-PRAMS mother

Background

Pregnant women have increased morbidity and mortality from influenza due to the changes that occur during pregnancy.¹⁻³ Influenza vaccination with the trivalent inactivated vaccine is the most effective way to protect pregnant women from influenza and its complications.^{4,5} Recent studies have demonstrated that vaccination during pregnancy significantly reduced the chance of influenza illness among infants up to 6 months of age.⁶⁻⁸ Vaccination of pregnant women is a key way to protect these babies who are at high risk of severe illness from influenza, but who are too young to be vaccinated.⁵⁻⁸

Before 2009, pregnant women had the lowest rates of influenza vaccination among all adult priority groups.^{9,10} In 2010-2011, only about half of pregnant women received the influenza vaccine in Washington. Prenatal health care providers play a critical role in increasing rates of influenza vaccination among pregnant women by recommending and providing influenza vaccine to their patients.^{10,11}

Influenza Vaccination Recommendations for Pregnant Women

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommend that women who are or plan to be pregnant during influenza season should receive the influenza vaccine as soon as possible.^{4,5} Inactivated influenza vaccine is considered effective during any stage

Recommended Actions for Prenatal Care Providers

There are many things that you can do to protect pregnant and postpartum women and infants from this vaccine-preventable disease.

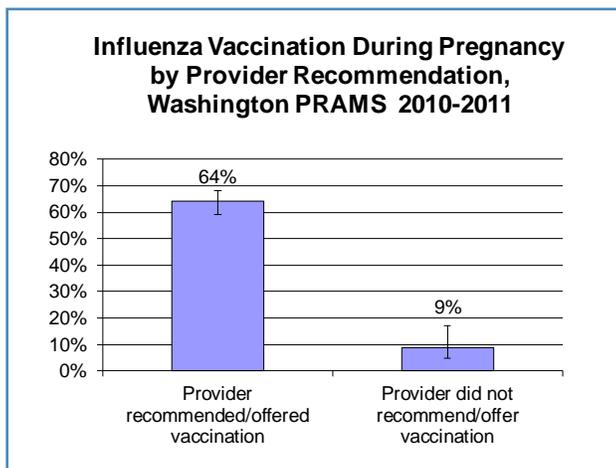
- Educate staff and pregnant women about the importance of influenza vaccination during pregnancy and evidence related to its safety; provide a strong recommendation for vaccination.
- Issue standing orders for influenza vaccination of pregnant and post-partum women.
- Establish an influenza vaccination reminder system in your practices.
- Post influenza prevention announcements and provide brochures to prompt vaccination requests.
- Offer vaccination to pregnant women at the earliest opportunity and throughout flu season (October-April).
- Vaccinate all healthcare personnel in your practices to prevent healthcare personnel from influenza and from spreading influenza to patients.
- Vaccinate postpartum women who were not vaccinated during pregnancy, preferably before hospital discharge or at 6 week postpartum visit.
- Know where to refer patients if influenza vaccine is not available in your practice.
- Educate staff and postpartum women that breastfeeding is not a contraindication to vaccination.
- Advise family members and other close contacts of pregnant and postpartum women and infants that they should also be vaccinated against influenza.
- Advise patients to call you right away if they get sick with flu-like symptoms. If needed, prescribe an antiviral medicine that treats the flu.

of pregnancy and is proven to benefit both the mother and baby.^{4,5}

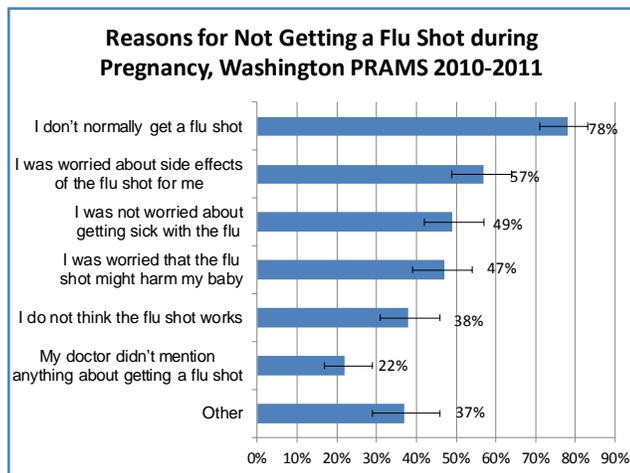
The Washington Experience

In 2010-2011, Washington collected information on influenza vaccination through CDC's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS). PRAMS data are used to measure progress toward goals in improving the health of mothers and infants, and to identify women and infants at high risk for health problems.

Washington PRAMS data demonstrate that health care providers play a critical role in the acceptance of influenza vaccine. Provider recommendations to get vaccinated and/or offer vaccination in the office increased flu vaccination by pregnant women significantly.



Washington's data reveal several reasons why women do not receive influenza vaccinations during pregnancy.



PRAMS surveys women 2-6 months post partum about pregnancy experiences.

To learn more about PRAMS, visit: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/PRAMS>

For more information about adult immunizations, including vaccines for pregnant and/or postpartum women, visit: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunizations/Adult.aspx>

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