



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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November 19, 2015

Dear Colleague:

As a healthcare provider, you play an important role in whether or not your patients decide to get vaccinated. Pregnant women are more likely to be vaccinated when you recommend and offer the flu shot. Flu vaccination is recommended for pregnant and postpartum women by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Nurse-Midwives, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Please consider the following messages when talking with your pregnant and postpartum patients about the importance of flu vaccination and prompt treatment for flu.

Flu is more likely to cause severe illness in pregnant and postpartum women.

- Getting the flu during pregnancy may cause serious problems for both mother and baby, including premature labor and delivery, unplanned hospitalization and possibly death.

Getting vaccinated is the best protection.

- Women can get the flu shot any time during pregnancy or after birth, even if they're breastfeeding.
- The flu shot has been safely given to millions of pregnant women over many years. However, pregnant women should not receive the nasal spray vaccine.
- Getting a flu shot during pregnancy helps protect babies for up to six months after birth - the time when babies cannot get vaccinated against flu and are particularly vulnerable.
- Recommending flu vaccine to caregivers and household members of pregnant and postpartum women will help protect not only the pregnant mother but also the new infant once he or she is born.
- Recommending and offering Tdap vaccine during each pregnancy, ideally between 27 and 36 weeks gestation, will help protect mom and her newborn from whooping cough.

Antiviral medication can treat the flu.

- Prompt treatment with [antiviral medication](#) is important. If a pregnant or postpartum woman gets sick with flu-like symptoms, she should call her doctor right away. Early treatment can lessen symptoms. Antiviral treatment can, and should, be started even before influenza is confirmed.

Thank you for helping to protect pregnant and postpartum women from the flu this year.

New in 2015, the Department of Health has developed a bilingual [Frequently Asked Questions about Flu Vaccine and Pregnancy page](#) that addresses common concerns and inquiries. Also new are updated [flu and pregnancy fliers](#) with additional resources for information and support.

Flu resources specific to [providers](#) and [pregnant/postpartum patients](#) are also available for printing purposes or online viewing. For additional flu information, visit the [Department of Health](#) or [CDC](#) websites.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy Lofy".

Kathy Lofy, MD
State Health Officer