



INFLUENZA 2009 (H1N1 - 'SWINE FLU') VACCINATION IN PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING.

Information in this leaflet is general in nature and should not take the place of advice from your health care provider. With every pregnancy there is a 3 to 5% risk of having a baby with a birth defect.

What is H1N1 influenza ('Swine flu')?

A new strain of influenza A virus (novel influenza A H1N1) or swine flu started in Mexico early in 2009 and has rapidly spread from Central and North America to Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Influenza is an infection of the respiratory tract and is commonly known as flu. Influenza can be caused by a number of different viruses. Common symptoms of flu include generally feeling unwell, fever, headache, runny nose, muscle aches and pains, sore throat and cough. The common cold tends to be milder and without the high fevers, muscle aches and pains.

What happens if you get flu when you are pregnant?

Pregnant women who get influenza are at greater risk of developing serious breathing problems, such as pneumonia which may result in their hospitalisation. This applies to all types of influenza, not just H1N1 influenza. The complications may put both mother and baby at risk. In the current pandemic it has been seen that pregnant women are more susceptible to complications of the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus than the general population. Some women who have caught this disease have miscarried or gone into premature labour. Some babies have had to be delivered by early emergency caesarean section, and some mothers have died.

What is the H1N1 influenza (Panvax®) vaccine?

The H1N1 influenza (Panvax®) vaccine, released in October 2009, has been produced in response to the current pandemic.

The process used to manufacture the vaccine is the same process used each year to manufacture seasonal influenza vaccines, which protect against the strains of influenza thought to be causing infection around the world each season. The H1N1 influenza vaccine differs from these in that it only targets one strain, the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus. The vaccine only has a fragment of the killed virus, and does not contain any live virus.

Is it safe for pregnant women to receive the H1N1 influenza (Panvax®) vaccine?

Yes. Pregnant women are considered a high priority group, and it is recommended they get the vaccine. The vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy, and will protect both mother and baby. Seasonal influenza vaccines are safe during pregnancy and are normally recommended for all pregnant women¹. Only those women with an allergy or hypersensitivity to eggs should not receive the influenza vaccine as the virus used for the vaccine is grown in eggs.

How long after vaccination before protection occurs and how long will it last?

Protection after vaccination varies from person to person, but people generally start producing the antibodies that provide protection two weeks after the vaccination. Protection is expected to last for at least one year.

The vaccine only protects against the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus. It will not protect against the seasonal influenza viruses. A seasonal influenza vaccine will still be required for protection against seasonal influenza viruses.

For more information call MotherSafe: NSW Medications in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Service on 9382 6539 (Sydney Metropolitan Area) or 1800 647 848 (Non-Metropolitan Area) Monday -Friday 9am-4pm (excluding public holidays)



Who else should be vaccinated?

The vaccine is available to all people 10 years of age and older but groups regarded as high priority for vaccination also include Indigenous Australians and people with underlying medical conditions. Parents and carers of infants should also get the vaccine to reduce the risk of infection to babies too young to be vaccinated. A vaccine for children is currently under development.

Vaccination of breastfeeding mothers¹

The vaccine is safe to be given to a breastfeeding mother. There is no evidence that the vaccine affects breast milk, and no evidence of risk to the breastfeeding baby.

Where do I get the H1N1 influenza (Panvax®) vaccine?

Vaccination is available from a range of locations, including General Practitioner offices, vaccination clinics, hospitals and health centres. Check with your General Practitioner as to when the vaccination service is available.

The H1N1 influenza (Panvax®) vaccine is free, although there may be a consultation fee from the doctor or immunisation service provider.

Further Information:

- ❑ NSW Health. H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) Vaccination.

http://www.emergency.health.nsw.gov.au/swineflu/vaccination/consumers_vaccination_information.asp

- ❑ Australian Government. Department of Health and Aging. Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Vaccine

<http://www.healthemergency.gov.au/internet/healthemergency/publishing.nsf/Content/pandemic-vaccine-gna-toc>

References

1. Australian Immunisation Handbook - 9th Edition 2008 (NHMRC)

<http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook-home>

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