

---

## FACTSHEET

October 21, 2009

Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport  
Ministry of Health Services

### **H1N1 INFORMATION FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND NEW MOTHERS**

Pregnant women and new mothers are at higher risk of complications from the H1N1 flu virus, and should be aware of how to protect themselves.

Common sense precautions such as avoiding contact with sick people, frequent hand washing, staying home if you're sick and coughing into your sleeve, will best protect yourself and your baby during this vulnerable time. There are a number of other steps you can also take.

#### **Before you have influenza symptoms:**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- During one of your regular doctor visits, talk with your doctor about whether you should get a prescription for antiviral medication in advance. Antivirals work best when taken within 24 to 48 hours after the onset of flu symptoms.
- When you get this prescription, **do not fill it right away.**
- All information available suggests there are no serious side effects related to these medications and no reason to avoid them in pregnancy. However, if you do think you are having a side effect due to antiviral drugs, call your doctor right away.
- You may wish to find a "flu buddy" to help you pick up medication in the event you become ill and are unable to leave the house to go to a pharmacy.

#### **If you get the flu:**

- Call 811 or your doctor to review your symptoms and help you decide whether you need to visit a clinic or the hospital.
- Treat any fever right away with fever-reducing medicine such as acetaminophen (for example, Tylenol). Pregnant women should not use aspirin or other anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen.
- If your doctor believes you might have the H1N1 flu virus and it is safe for you to stay home, you can then get your prescription for antiviral medication filled and begin to take it.
- If you are a new mother at home with your newborn, be careful not to cough or sneeze in your baby's face.
- Your doctor might ask you to wear a mask to keep from spreading this flu virus to your baby.

#### **Vaccines:**

With the approval by Health Canada regulators, the pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine will be made available to British Columbians beginning the week of October 26. The vaccine will be available first to those people who would benefit most from immunization, including pregnant women.

Pregnant women in the second half of pregnancy are among those at highest risk of severe outcomes from the pandemic H1N1 virus. Since B.C. is experiencing epidemic levels of the

H1N1 virus now, pregnant women in second half of pregnancy are advised not to wait until November for unadjuvanted vaccine, but to get immunized now with the adjuvanted version.

The pandemic H1N1 vaccine is an adjuvanted vaccine. Adjuvants are compounds that boost the immune system's response to vaccine, allowing smaller doses to be used per person. A version of the H1N1 vaccine without adjuvant will also be available in B.C. beginning the second week of November.

While the unadjuvanted H1N1 vaccine is recommended for pregnant women, the adjuvanted version, available earlier next week, is approved for everyone who wants to protect themselves from this pandemic.

**Breastfeeding:**

- Mothers who are breastfeeding should continue to nurse their babies when they have the flu and while being treated for the flu.
- A mother's milk is made to fight diseases in her baby. This is very important for babies when their immune system is still developing.
- Do not stop breastfeeding if you are ill; breastfeed early and often. Limit formula feeds if you can as this will help protect your baby from infection.
- If you are too sick to breastfeed, pump and have someone give the expressed milk to your baby.
- A sick mother should wear a mask and wash her hands frequently when caring for her baby and while feeding.

You can call [HealthLink BC](#) at 8-1-1, 24 hours a day/seven days a week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or are concerned about any illness/symptoms experienced by you or your children.

For the latest facts on the H1N1 flu virus, visit [www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1](http://www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1).

