



Pregnant Women: Flu Vaccination Factsheet

This flu season, uptake of the flu vaccination by pregnant women in Surrey Heartlands is currently lower than in previous years. We're calling for your support in debunking any myths and sharing factual information with any pregnant women you come into contact with.

If you are speaking with a pregnant woman, ask her if she has had a flu vaccination since September 2020. If she hasn't, please talk through the following topics to ensure that she is completely aware of the benefits of the flu vaccine, who is eligible, when to have it, where to get it in a COVID-19 safe way and what to do if she suspects that she already has flu.

1. Benefits

Why am I eligible for a flu vaccine?

- As a pregnant woman you may be less able to fight off infections, increasing your risk of becoming ill from flu.
- Pregnancy naturally weakens the body's immune system and as a result flu can cause serious complications for women and their babies.

What are the benefits?

The flu vaccine will:

- Reduce your risk of serious complications such as pneumonia, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy. Bronchitis is one of the most common complications of flu, it is a chest infection that can become serious and develop into pneumonia.
- Reduce the risk of miscarriage or having a baby born too soon or with a low birth weight which could even lead to stillbirth or death.
- Help protect your baby who will continue to have some immunity to flu during the first few months of their life.
- Reduce the chance of you passing the infection to your new baby.

2. Safety

Is it safe?

- The flu jab is the safest way to help protect you and your baby against flu, no matter how many months pregnant or how fit and healthy you may feel.
- The flu vaccine can be given safely at any stage of pregnancy, from conception.



3. How often, who and where from

I had the flu vaccination last year. Do I need another one this year?

- Yes. The flu vaccine for each winter helps provide protection against the strains of flu that are likely to be present and may be different from those circulating last year.
- For this reason we strongly recommend that even if you were vaccinated last year, you should be vaccinated again this year.
- In addition, protection from the flu vaccine may only last about six months so you should have the flu vaccine each flu season.
- You can have the flu vaccine any time from now until March next year.

I think I've already had flu, do I need a vaccination?

- Yes. Other viruses can give you flu-like symptoms, or you may have had flu but because there is more than one type of flu virus you should still have the vaccine even if you think you've had flu.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?

- From your GP, or it may also be available from your pharmacist or midwife.

Is the flu vaccine free?

- Yes. All pregnant women are eligible for a free flu vaccination.

4. COVID-19 safe

Will I be safe when I go for the flu vaccine if COVID-19 is still around?

- While COVID-19 is in circulation, providers of flu vaccination will have measures in place to keep you safe.
- Staff giving the vaccine will be wearing protective equipment to protect both you and themselves from the virus.
- Appointment times may also be scheduled to reduce numbers in the waiting area or you may be asked not to arrive early.

5. Already suffering from flu like symptoms

I am pregnant and I think I may have flu. What should I do?

- If you have flu symptoms you should talk to your doctor urgently, because if you do have flu there is a prescribed medicine that might help (or reduce the risk of complications), but it needs to be taken as soon as possible after the symptoms appear.