



# CDC: What Pregnant Women Should Know about H1N1 (Swine Flu)

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## What if I get this new virus and I'm pregnant?

We don't know if this virus will affect the baby.

We do know that pregnant women are more likely to get sick than others and have more serious problems with flu. These problems may include early labor or severe pneumonia.

## What can I do to protect myself, my baby and my family?

Take these everyday steps to help prevent the spread of germs and protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or sneeze into your sleeve. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based gel hand cleaners are also good to use.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Notify your OB provider if you have been within 3 feet of someone with H1N1 or influenza. The CDC recommends that pregnant women who have been in close contact with someone with H1N1 flu take antiviral medicine. Antiviral drugs are prescription pills, liquids or inhalers that fight against the flu by keeping the germs from growing in your body. These medicines can make you feel better faster and make your symptoms milder.
- You may return to work, school or other regular daily activities after you have been started on antivirals if you are not sick.
- Have a plan to care for sick family members. You should not take care of sick family members since you are at risk of developing complications.
- If you must care for people with flu, wear a mask if you are within three feet of them and wash your hands frequently.
- Stock up on household, health, and emergency supplies, such as water, Tylenol®, non-perishable foods.

## Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs

Washing with soap and water

- Use warm water
- Wash for 15 to 20 seconds

Using alcohol-based gel hand cleaner

- Don't add water
- Rub the gel on your hands until dry

## H1N1 symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches

- Chills and fatigue
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

### What should I do if I get sick?

- If you get sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home, limit contact with others and call your OB provider. You should be treated with antiviral medicine and may need to be monitored. Pregnant women are at an increased risk of complications from influenza.
- DO NOT resume regular contact with others until 7 days after your symptoms began or until you have been without a fever for at least 24 hours without taking Tylenol®, whichever is longer. Your provider will reschedule you for an appointment at the appropriate time.
- If you live alone, have someone check in with you often if you are feeling ill. This is always a good idea.

### How is H1N1 flu treated?

- Treat any fever right away.
- Tylenol® (acetaminophen) is the best treatment of fever in pregnancy
- Drink plenty of fluids to replace those you lose when you are sick
- Your doctor will decide if you will need antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu® (oseltamivir) or Relenza® (zanamivir).
- These medicines work best when started soon after symptoms begin (within 48 hours), but they may also be given to very sick or high risk people (like pregnant women) even after 48 hours. Antiviral treatment is taken for 5 days.
- Tamiflu® and Relenza® are also used to prevent H1N1 after close contact with persons with flu and are taken for 7-10 days.
- There is little information about the effect of antiviral drugs in pregnant women or their babies, but no serious side effects have been reported. If you do think you have had a side effect to antiviral drugs, call your doctor right away.

### When should I get emergency medical care?

If you have any of these signs, put on a mask and seek emergency medical care right away:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Contractions and/or symptoms of labor
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Vomiting and cannot hold down liquids
- Decreased or no movement of your baby
- A fever that is not responding to Tylenol®

### How should I feed my baby?

Flu can be very serious in young babies. Babies who are breast-fed do not get as sick and are sick less often from the flu, than do babies who are not breast-fed.

Breast-feeding protects babies. Breast milk passes on antibodies from the mother to a baby. Antibodies help fight off infection.

### **Is it ok to breast-feed my baby when I am sick?**

- A mother's milk is made to fight diseases in her baby. This is really important in young babies when their immune system is still growing.
- Avoid contact with your baby until you have been on antiviral medicine for 48 hours, have not had a fever for 24 hours and you can control your coughs and sneezes. During this time, you do not have to stop breast-feeding. We encourage you to pump and have someone who is not ill feed breast milk to your baby until you can handle your baby without the risk of infection again.
- Once you are clear to have contact, please wear a mask and change into clean clothes until 7 days after the flu-like symptoms began to keep from spreading this new virus to your baby.

### **Is it ok to take medicine to treat or prevent H1N1 flu while breast-feeding?**

Yes. Mothers who are breastfeeding can continue to nurse their babies while being treated for the flu.