

# Issue Brief

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## Flu Shots for Women During and After Pregnancy: Information about Illinois Women

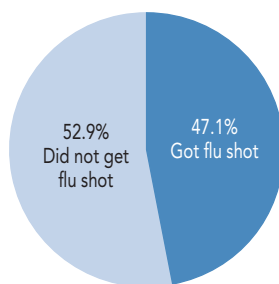
*Getting the flu shot while you are pregnant will help protect you and your baby.*

The flu can cause you to become very sick if you are pregnant.<sup>1-3</sup> This is because of the changes that your body goes through during pregnancy. These changes make it easier for you to get very ill when you have the flu.<sup>1-3</sup> The best way to protect yourself against the flu is to get the flu shot every year.<sup>4,5</sup> Getting the flu shot while you are pregnant will help protect you, as well as your baby, who is too young to receive the flu shot.<sup>4-8</sup> Experts recommend that you get a flu shot if you are pregnant, no matter how far along you are in your pregnancy.<sup>4,5</sup>

### The Illinois Experience

Illinois collects information on the health of women who are pregnant and recently gave birth. During the 2009-2010 flu season, less than half of women who had a baby in Illinois, or 47.1%, got the flu shot.

How Many Women Got the Flu Shot?



*"I was surprised my doctor didn't talk to me about... flu vaccinations."*

—PRAMS mother

### Information and Actions for Pregnant Women

#### Is it safe for you to get a flu shot while you are pregnant?

Yes. The flu shot has been given safely to millions of pregnant women over many years. Flu shots have not been shown to cause any harm to pregnant women or their babies. In fact, flu shots during pregnancy protect the baby.

#### Is a flu shot safe for unborn babies?

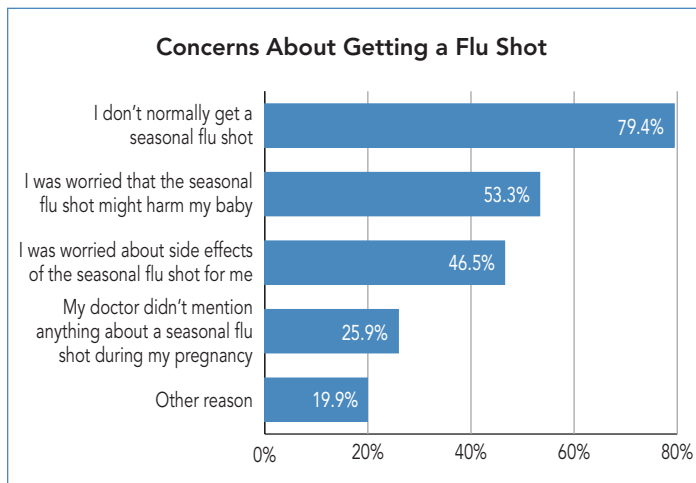
Many studies show that pregnant women who get the flu shot are safe. These studies have shown no sign of harm to pregnant women, to the unborn child (or fetus) or to newborns of vaccinated women. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and CDC keep track of safety issues and have not seen any need for concern.

#### When should you get the flu shot?

Experts have recommended that you get the flu shot if you are pregnant.

**Speak to your health care provider if you have questions about getting the flu shot.**

Some Illinois women did not get a flu shot during or after their pregnancy. Here are some of the reasons they gave for not getting the shot:



If you have any concerns about the flu shots, talk to your health care provider. A flu shot is recommended during pregnancy because it can protect you and your baby.

### Other everyday actions you can take to prevent the flu:

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**  
When you are sick, stay away from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**  
If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.**  
Use a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Wash your hands often.**  
Washing your hands helps protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**  
Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Practice other good health habits.**  
Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

**For more information about vaccination, including other vaccines for pregnant and/or postpartum women, visit:**

[www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm)

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/preg-guide.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/preg-guide.htm)

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