

Protect yourself and others



Fact sheet for pregnant women

Everything you need to know about flu protection during pregnancy

How dangerous is flu during pregnancy?

Pregnant women are more likely than non-pregnant women to catch flu and are more likely to suffer complications, such as pneumonia. This is particularly true in the second half of pregnancy. Flu leads to increased pregnancy and birth complications, premature birth and growth delays in the child. Infants also have a significantly increased risk of suffering from severe flu during the first six months.

How and when should I get protected?

The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) recommends the flu vaccination to all pregnant women and to all women who have given birth in the last four weeks. The flu vaccination season lasts from mid-October until the beginning of the flu epidemic. In Switzerland, the flu epidemic usually starts in January. You can have a flu vaccination at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccination or any time before or after a COVID-19 vaccination. If you need advice, talk to your doctor.

Why should I get vaccinated? Will this also protect my child?

Vaccination prevents flu and its complications, which are more likely to occur during pregnancy. When a pregnant woman gets a flu vaccination, she is not only increasing her own protection: maternal antibodies can also protect the newborn against flu for several weeks after birth. Infants born to mothers who had a flu vaccination during pregnancy are less likely to catch flu and are less likely to be hospitalised due to flu in the first few months of their lives. This is especially important as infants cannot be vaccinated before six months of age and are thus at risk of catching flu.

How safe is the vaccination during pregnancy?

Flu vaccination is safe throughout pregnancy and has no negative effects on your unborn child. The vaccines recommended for pregnant women are inactivated, which means they do not contain any live flu viruses, only the surface proteins. They do not have any known negative effects on pregnancy outcomes, foetal development, birth outcomes or breastfeeding. Both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Swiss Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (SGGG) recommend the flu vaccination for all women during pregnancy.

What are the possible side effects?

After you have had a flu vaccination, you may experience soreness or redness at the injection site. Less common side effects are a high temperature, muscle pain and feeling slightly ill. These are generally harmless and subside after a few days. In very rare cases, people may experience a rash, oedema, or in the case of an allergy, breathing difficulties or an immediate allergic reaction (anaphylactic shock). However, one thing is certain: the risk of developing severe flu complications is many times higher than the likelihood of experiencing severe side effects following the vaccination. Pregnant women are no more likely than the general population to experience the possible side effects of the flu vaccination mentioned above.

Who covers the costs?

The costs of the vaccination are covered by the compulsory health insurance provided your deductible has already been used up.