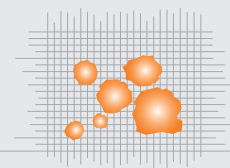


Influenza infection in pregnancy

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Are pregnant women more at risk if they contract influenza?

Pregnant women who contract influenza have an increased risk of severe respiratory infections,¹⁻⁴ with one study finding a rate of hospitalisation of 0.4–0.5%.^{4,5} This risk has been reported to increase to 5% for women with asthma.⁵ The infection may also increase the risk of delivery complications.¹

Reports during the H1N1 influenza pandemic showed that pregnant women were at greater risk of complications of H1N1 infections.^{6,7} The increased risk of severe respiratory complications for H1N1 was confirmed in NZ, with a disproportionate rate of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) admissions for pregnant women (Personal

communication, Professor Cindy Farquhar, The University of Auckland, New Zealand).

There have been reports in the literature that high fever during pregnancy, such as from influenza, may cause congenital abnormalities.⁸⁻¹⁰

Influenza vaccination

Due to the potential risks of influenza in pregnancy, the seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for pregnant women, especially those with comorbidities.^{11,12} The number needed to treat (NNT) with vaccination to prevent one influenza-like illness is 20 to 23 pregnant women.¹³ The seasonal influenza vaccination has been given to millions of pregnant women over many years.¹⁴

KEY POINTS

- Pregnant women who contract influenza in pregnancy, especially in a pandemic, have more complications than non-pregnant women—especially respiratory complications.
- The H1N1 influenza resulted in a disproportionate number of hospitalisations (to Intensive Care Units) and deaths in pregnant women.
- There is concern that high fever during pregnancy, including fever from influenza, may be a risk factor for congenital abnormalities, central nervous system defects, and possibly schizophrenia.
- Seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for pregnant women.

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NUGGETS of KNOWLEDGE provides succinct summaries of pharmaceutical evidence about treatment of common conditions presenting in primary care and possible adverse drug reactions.

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