

Vaccination against influenza

If you are pregnant, you are at greater risk of becoming seriously ill with influenza. You should, therefore, vaccinate yourself against influenza after the 16th week of pregnancy. The vaccine will not affect either your pregnancy or the development of the foetus. The vast majority of women who contract influenza during pregnancy do not become particularly ill, but the risk of serious illness or even death is greater for pregnant women than it is for other people who are otherwise healthy.

Pregnant women should be vaccinated

The recommendation of Folkhälsomyndigheten (Sweden's Public Health Agency) is that pregnant women vaccinate themselves against influenza during the period November to January. The vaccination is recommended after the 16th week of pregnancy as the risk of becoming seriously ill with influenza is greatest during the later stages of pregnancy. If you are at risk of becoming seriously ill with influenza for any other reason, we recommend that you are vaccinated even earlier; such reasons could include chronic heart disease, chronic lung disease, diabetes or extreme obesity. It is safe to use the vaccine at any stage of the pregnancy.

The vaccination does not affect the foetus

The foetus is not affected by the vaccination. A number of scientific studies show that there is no difference between foetal development in pregnant women who are vaccinated and in those who are not vaccinated.

The vaccine also protects the new-born baby

If you have been vaccinated, your baby will also have some degree of protection against influenza during the first months after birth. This happens because your antibodies are transferred to the foetus during pregnancy. At the same time, the risk that you will become ill with influenza and infect your new-born baby is reduced.

The side effects are mild

There are possible side effects of the influenza vaccine, but the benefits of being vaccinated outweigh the risks. The most-common side effects are mild and short-lived. It is not possible to contract influenza from the vaccine. There is no connection between the seasonal influenza vaccine and narcolepsy.

Not everybody should take the vaccine

The vaccine may contain small amounts of egg protein, as the majority of influenza vaccines use an influenza virus that has been cultivated in hen's eggs. If you have a strong allergy to eggs, contact a doctor. You should also say if you are allergic to anything else in the vaccine, or if you have experienced a reaction to previous vaccinations.

The vaccine provides protection for one season

The effects of the influenza vaccine last for 6 to 9 months, which is long enough for one influenza season. The vaccine protects against three types of influenza. These types may change from time to time, and new viruses may sometimes appear. For this reason, the vaccine is replaced before each season.

Pregnant women with influenza should seek medical attention

It is important to be aware that pregnant women can become seriously ill with influenza – especially during the later stages of pregnancy. If you suspect that you may have contracted influenza, you should immediately seek medical attention, even if you do not feel particularly ill and regardless of the stage of your pregnancy. You could, for example, need anti-viral medicine, which is most effective if it is introduced as quickly as possible.

