

Flu Season 2009

Flu season is here and the team at Pacific NW Fertility wants to make every effort to keep our staff and patients as healthy as possible. Many of our patients are pregnant or planning on becoming pregnant during this flu season. Pregnant women are more susceptible to contracting the flu virus and becoming more ill from the flu than they would be if they were not pregnant. Here are our answers to some frequently asked questions about the flu. Please note that we got these answers from the Centers for Disease Control and we encourage you to stay informed by reading their website from time to time for more information: http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/vaccination/pregnant_qa.htm

FAQ's

1. How does the flu spread?

Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

2. What are the signs and symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

3. How serious is the flu?

While most people who get sick with the flu recover without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred. In seasonal flu, certain people are at “high risk” of serious complications. This includes people 65 years and older, children younger than five years old, **pregnant women**, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions. About 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with this 2009 H1N1 virus (swine flu) have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at “high risk” of serious seasonal flu-related complications. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

4. How long are infected people contagious?

People infected with the flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5-7 days after.

5. How can I protect myself and my family from getting the flu?

- a. Vaccination is the most important step – see below
- b. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- c. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based cleansers are also effective.
- d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- e. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- f. If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

Seasonal Flu Vaccination

1. Who should get vaccinated?

In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. People who are at high risk of having serious flu complications or people who live with or care for those at high risk for serious complications are especially encouraged to get the vaccine, such as:

- a. Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
- b. **Pregnant women**
- c. People 50 years of age and older
- d. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- e. Health care workers

2. When should I get vaccinated?

As soon as the vaccine is available, this is usually September. Flu season typically starts in October and peaks in January.

3. Where can I get vaccinated?

Your primary care physician and most pharmacies.

What about the Swine Flu (H1N1 Virus)?

- 2009 H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.
- This virus was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America.
- Human infections with the new H1N1 virus are ongoing in the United States. Most people who have become ill with this new virus have recovered without requiring medical treatment.
- The symptoms of H1N1 virus are the same as the seasonal flu (see above)
- Recommendations of spread of the H1N1 virus are the same as the seasonal flu (see above)
- **A vaccine is currently available for the H1N1 virus.** The CDC recommends that pregnant women get vaccinated with the H1N1 virus vaccine as well as the seasonal flu vaccine (getting one vaccination does not protect you from both types of flu)
 - The H1N1 vaccine will most likely be given in a single shot
 - It should be available to pregnant women from their primary care physicians and obgyn offices
 - You may get the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine shot on the same day – just in different spots (different arms for example)
 - **Influenza vaccines have not been shown to cause harm to a pregnant woman or her baby. The seasonal flu shot (injection only, not the mist) is proven as safe and already recommended for pregnant women.**
 - The 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine will be made using the same processes and facilities that are used to make seasonal influenza vaccines.