

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

December 17, 2013

Dear Colleague:

At ten weeks into the 2013-2014 influenza season (September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013 to December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013) levels of influenza and influenza-like illness are increasing across the state. Influenza A (2009 H1N1) has been identified as the predominantly circulating strain of influenza this season nationwide and in Florida. In recent weeks, the Florida Department of Health has received reports of severe illness, including hospitalizations requiring ICU care, among pregnant women. None of these pregnant women experiencing severe complications had received the 2013-2014 influenza vaccine.

**Please encourage your pregnant and postpartum patients to get vaccinated against influenza:**

- **Influenza is five times more likely to cause severe illness in pregnant women than women who are not pregnant.**
  - Changes in immune, heart and lung functions during pregnancy increase the risk for severe complications from influenza.
  - Pregnant women with underlying health conditions are at greater risk of serious illness from flu than their healthy counterparts.
  - Influenza infections also increases the risk for premature labor and delivery.
- **Pregnant women receiving a recommendation and offer of vaccination by their healthcare provider were over six times more likely to get vaccinated (65%) than women who did not receive a recommendation or offer (10%).**
  - The CDC estimates that only 41% of pregnant women have received influenza vaccine so far this influenza season.
- **Inactivated influenza vaccines are safe and the best protection for pregnant women and their fetuses.**
  - Inactivated trivalent and quadrivalent influenza vaccines are indicated for use in pregnant women. Pregnancy is contraindicated for vaccination with live attenuated influenza vaccine, which is administered intranasally. Postpartum women, including those who are breastfeeding, can receive either type of vaccine.
  - Vaccination is indicated at any time during the pregnancy.
  - Vaccination during pregnancy has been shown to protect both the mother and her infant (up to 6 months of age) from influenza illness, influenza hospitalizations, and influenza-related preterm birth.
  - Inactivated influenza vaccines are safe. No evidence exists to suggest harm to the fetus from maternal vaccination.

**Florida Department of Health**

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**Early treatment is important for pregnant women**

- Antiviral treatment is recommended **as early as possible** for pregnant or postpartum (within two weeks of delivery) women with confirmed or suspected influenza. Delayed antiviral treatment (longer than 2 days) has been associated with increased risk of severe illness (such as hospitalization and death).
- **Postpartum women and caretakers of children under six months old should get vaccinated** against influenza to protect against transmission of influenza to children too young to be vaccinated.

Influenza A (2009 H1N1) is included in all 2013-2014 influenza vaccine formulations. You play a crucial role in helping to prevent influenza and its severe complications in your patients and their infants. More information can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/>.

Sincerely,



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Division of Disease Control & Health Protection