

Communication Toolkit: Pregnant Women



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Vaccines are an important component of a healthy pregnancy. Women should be up to date on their vaccines before becoming pregnant, and should receive vaccines against both the flu and whooping cough (pertussis) during pregnancy. These vaccines not only protect the mother by preventing illnesses and complications, but also pass on protection to her baby before birth.

Women who are planning to become pregnant may need to receive some vaccines before the start of pregnancy. These vaccines, such as the measles mumps rubella (MMR) vaccine, may need to be administered at least 4 weeks before a woman becomes pregnant. Some vaccine-preventable diseases, such as rubella, can lead to significant pregnancy complications, including birth defects.

Pregnancy is a good time for expectant mothers to start learning about the safe, proven disease protection that vaccines will provide to their babies once they are born. Pregnant women also should plan on getting flu and whooping cough vaccines during their pregnancy. Pregnant women are at increased risk for serious complications from the flu. The flu shot helps to protect a pregnant woman and her developing baby from the flu. There is some data to suggest that even if a vaccinated person gets the flu, their symptoms may be milder because they were vaccinated. The pregnant mother passes flu shot antibodies on to her developing baby so the baby is protected for several months after he or she is born. By getting a whooping cough vaccine in the third trimester, the pregnant mother also develops antibodies and passes them on to her developing baby so that her baby is born with protection against whooping cough.

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