

# FLU, PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING

## Pregnancy and vulnerability:

Pregnancy is a special situation when numerous changes take place in the mother's body, among them a natural lowering of immunity (that is, our ability to guard against infection). It is this loss of immunity that makes expectant mothers more vulnerable to flu.

This greater predisposition in pregnancy has always occurred, both in previous pandemics and in seasonal flu. However, most expectant mothers who get flu recover from it without complications, like the rest of the population. This is also the case with Swine flu or pandemic (H1N1). In general, cases of this flu in pregnant women have been mild, just as with normal flu.

## Preventing flu in expectant mothers:

The measures for preventing flu during pregnancy and to avoid transmission are the same as those we recommend for anyone:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Avoid contact with persons who have flu symptoms.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover your nose and mouth with disposable handkerchiefs (single use), always put them in the waste bin, and wash your hands well afterwards.
- If possible, avoid very crowded places where there might be people with flu.
- Whenever you can, try to keep enclosed places well ventilated.
- To keep up your immunity, follow any dietary advice given by your doctor, walk an hour a day if possible, sleep eight hours and avoid alcohol and cigarettes.



## Flu symptoms in expectant mothers:

The symptoms produced by the Swine flu in an expectant mother are the same as in any other person. You should consider the possibility you have caught it if suddenly you have:

1. **At least one** of these four symptoms:

- Temperature over 38 °C.
- General discomfort.
- Headache.
- Muscular pains.

2. **Also**, at least one of these three:

- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Breathing difficulty.

On occasions there may also be nausea and vomiting.



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## What should I do?

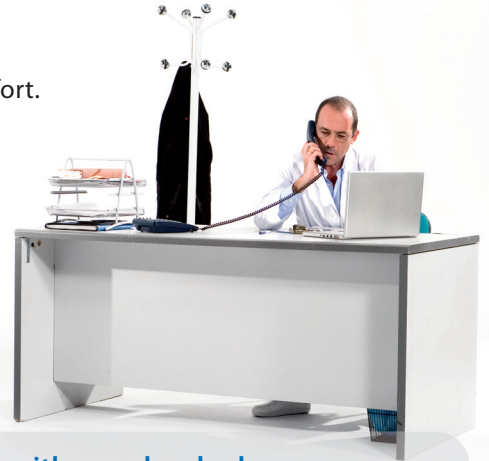
If you are pregnant and have flu symptoms, you should, during the first 48 hours, see your doctor for him to prescribe treatment if necessary.

During pregnancy, your temperature needs to be watched carefully and brought down as soon as possible with paracetamol.

If your case is not serious, the doctor may simply recommend that you stay at home resting until 24 hours after the **temperature** returns to normal.

If you develop any of the following symptoms during the illness, **get in touch with the health service as soon as possible**:

- Breathing difficulty.
- Feeling of lack of air, either when resting or when making a physical effort.
- Pain in the thorax.
- Bloody or abnormally coloured sputum.
- Giddiness or feeling faint.
- High temperature lasting more than three days.
- Lowered blood pressure.
- Sudden deterioration.
- Deterioration after seven days into the illness.
- Symptoms other than the usual ones for flu.



## What should I do if I am pregnant and have been in close contact with people who have, or might have, flu?

Be alert to the possible flu symptoms listed above. If flu-type symptoms appear, see your doctor immediately, because in pregnancy it is essential to treat flu as soon as possible (during the first 48 hours) in order to avoid possible complications.

## Flu vaccines

- Administration of the deactivated seasonal flu vaccine is recommended for all expectant mothers. This vaccine can be administered during any of the three-month periods during pregnancy.
- Administration of the vaccine against the swine flu will begin on 16 November in our country. Expectant mothers are one of the groups classed as a priority for this vaccine. Consult your doctor.

## Breastfeeding and flu

Breastfeeding transfers antibodies from the mother to the newborn child, thus protecting the baby from infection during the first six months, until it develops its own immunity.

If you are breastfeeding your baby, and **if you have the flu, do not suspend lactancy**. The flu virus is not transmitted through mother's milk.

While breastfeeding, **you can use a mask** so that if you cough, the droplets of saliva will not come into contact with the baby.

If maternal circumstances make breastfeeding very difficult, the mother **can draw milk herself and give it to the baby afterwards in the feeding bottle**.

Nor is it recommended to suspend lactancy even if the mother is taking **antivirals** such as oseltamivir (TAMIFLU®) or zanamivir (RELENZA®), as the levels of these in mother's milk **will not harm the baby**.

