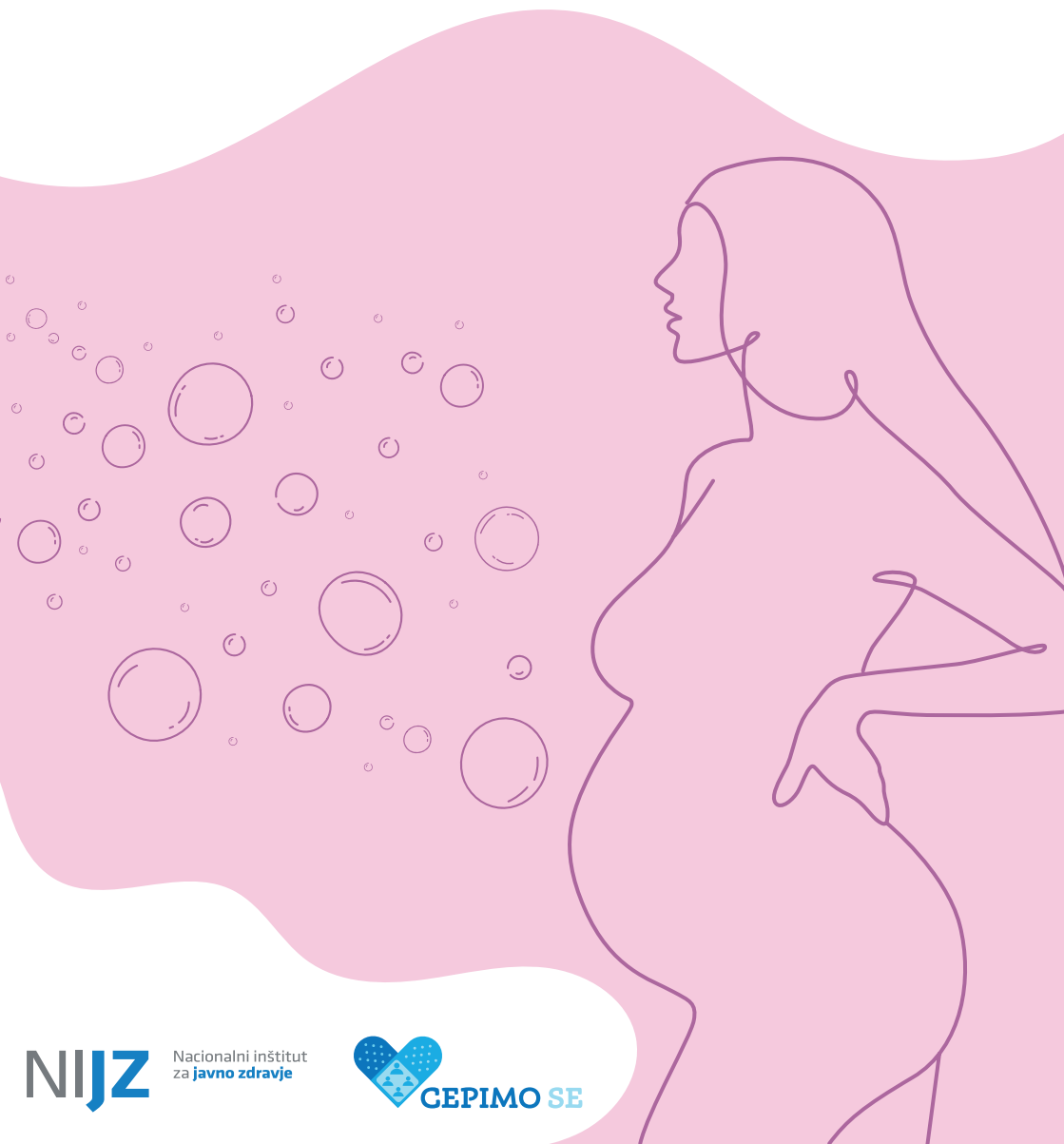


# HEALTHY MOTHER, HEALTHY BABY

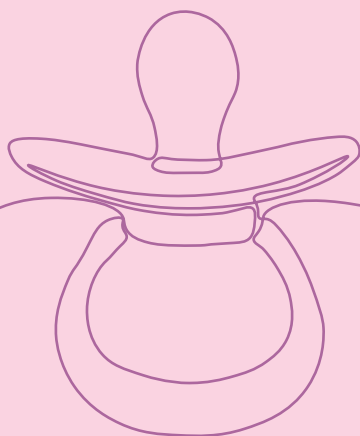


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**CEPIMO SE**



Ljubljana, september 2024  
National Institute of Public Health  
Supported by WHO

*Dear soon-to-be mother,*

*You are about to enter one of the most wonderful periods of your life – the anticipation of a new family member, followed by motherhood and parenthood. During this time, it is important to take care of your health – both yours and your baby’s. This brochure provides information on why it is important for you and your baby to be vaccinated against certain infectious diseases during pregnancy. This will help you to protect yourself safely and effectively, and your baby in the first, most vulnerable months of life. We wish you a healthy and safe pregnancy and family life.*

*National Institute of Public Health*

# Influenza

Pregnant women are at higher risk of complications from influenza

Influenza during pregnancy can cause premature birth or low birth weight of the new-born.

Influenza can be serious illness for new-born babies, as their immune system is not fully developed.

Getting the influenza vaccine in pregnancy protects you and your baby in the first months of life.

The vaccination is safe for the pregnant woman and the baby, is free of charge and can be given at any time during pregnancy.

## What is influenza?

Influenza is a communicable disease that is transmitted mainly by coughing, sneezing, close contact and through surfaces contaminated with respiratory secretions of the person with influenza. It is characterized by fever, chills, exhaustion, muscle and bone aches, sore throat and dry cough.

Although influenza can be complicated in healthy adults, there are groups of people who are at higher risk of complications. These include pregnant women.

**Bronchitis and pneumonia are among the possible complications of influenza in pregnant women. Other complications can also occur, leading to an unfavourable outcome. In addition, influenza in pregnancy increases the risk of premature birth and low birth weight.**

## Why is it important to be vaccinated against influenza in pregnancy?

This is the best way to protect against influenza for both pregnant woman and the baby. Pregnant women are at higher risk of getting influenza and of having a more severe or complicated course of illness. Pregnancy naturally suppresses the immune system, which is the body's defence against diseases. In addition, pregnancy puts extra strain on the lungs and heart.

**Pregnant women who get influenza vaccine are less likely to become ill – the risk is reduced by 40% to 60%. in addition, vaccination prevents severe cases of influenza, which can harm both mother and baby.**

## How will my baby benefit from vaccination?

Influenza can be a serious illness even for a new-born baby. The new-born's immune system is far from fully developed, making it harder for it to fight off infection. Vaccination during pregnancy creates antibodies that are passed to your baby through the placenta, and after birth, the baby receives the antibodies through breast milk. This protects the baby for the first six months of life, when babies cannot yet receive the influenza vaccine.

**Influenza vaccination during pregnancy reduces the risk of a child becoming ill with influenza and needing hospital treatment during the first six months of life.**

## When in pregnancy is vaccination recommended?

While it is advisable for pregnant women to be protected before the influenza season starts, it is also a good idea to be vaccinated during the season itself. Seasonal influenza vaccination is safe at all stages of pregnancy. It is particularly recommended for women who are or will be pregnant during winter months.

## Is the influenza vaccine safe?

Yes. The safety and effectiveness of the influenza vaccine during pregnancy have been established in a number of studies. It is an inactivated vaccine that cannot cause influenza.

## Will I be able to breastfeed after vaccination?

Yes. The influenza vaccine is also safe for breastfeeding women. Women who receive the influenza vaccine during pregnancy or breastfeeding develop antibodies that are passed on to their babies through breastfeeding, i.e. breast milk.

**A**s influenza is a highly infectious disease that affects between 100,000 and 200,000 people a year in Slovenia, it is important that people who will be in contact with your baby during the first months of life, especially in winter, are also vaccinated against influenza. This includes family members and caregivers.

# Whooping cough

Whooping cough is a serious illness that can be life threatening for an infant.

Vaccination in pregnancy is the best way to protect your baby in the first weeks of life.

The baby will still need a whooping cough vaccination at 3 months of age.

Get vaccinated in every pregnancy, as soon as possible after the 24th week.

You can get a vaccination free of charge from your personal or other doctor.

## What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a highly contagious bacterial respiratory infection that causes severe coughing fits. It mostly affects infants up to six months of age. Many babies with whooping cough do not cough at all, but may just stop breathing and turn blue.

**Small babies are at the highest risk of serious complications such as pneumonia, febrile convulsions, brain haemorrhage and breathing problems. They often need hospital treatment and may even die from whooping cough.**

## When is my baby at risk?

When in contact with a person who has whooping cough. The clinical picture of the disease is not characteristic at the beginning, so even people who do not have a characteristic cough can be infectious.

## Why is it important to be vaccinated against whooping cough in pregnancy?

Vaccinating pregnant women against whooping cough protects the baby against the disease in the first few weeks of life, before it establishes its own protection through vaccination starting at three months. In addition, the vaccination also protects a pregnant woman who may pass the diseases on to her baby after giving birth.

## When in pregnancy is vaccination recommended?

Vaccination of pregnant women is recommended as soon as possible after the 24th week of pregnancy, and in every pregnancy. Vaccination is recommended even if you had been vaccinated in the past or even if you have had whooping cough, as the protection is not permanent.



## Is the whooping cough vaccine safe?

Yes, it is safe for both the pregnant woman and the baby. The vaccination cannot cause whooping cough, as it is an inactivated vaccine. It also does not increase the risk of complications during pregnancy.

## Will I be able to breastfeed after vaccination?

Yes, the vaccine can be given to pregnant women who are going to breastfeed.

**I**t is important that the people who will be closest to your baby in the first weeks of life, i.e. other family members and carers, are also protected against whooping cough. They should be vaccinated at least two weeks before any contact with your baby. For the rest of your children, make sure they are vaccinated according to the national vaccination programme.

# RSV

RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis in young children.

Vaccination of a pregnant woman protects her baby against severe RSV infections during the first months of life.

RSV vaccination is recommended between 24 and 36 weeks of pregnancy.

You can get a vaccination free of charge from your personal or other doctor.

## What is RSV?

RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) is the most common cause of acute bronchiolitis in young children. About two-thirds of infants become infected with RSV in the first year of life, and by the end of the second year, almost every child is infected with RSV.

**Children born prematurely, those with chronic lung disease and those with severe congenital heart disease are particularly at risk of developing a more severe form of RSV infection.**

## How is RSV transmitted?

RSV infections are spread by body contact with infected people and by infectious droplets (coughing, sneezing). RSV can survive on surfaces for several hours. We are unknowingly exposed to the virus and can easily pass it on to infants.

## **Why is it important to be vaccinated against RSV in pregnancy?**

Vaccination of pregnant women against RSV is recommended because it stimulates the production of appropriate antibodies. These are then passed on from mother to baby, offering the new-born protection against severe RSV infections in the first months of life and reducing the risk of serious complications and hospitalisation.

## **When in pregnancy is vaccination recommended?**

RSV vaccination is recommended between 24 and 36 weeks of pregnancy. This is the period when enough antibodies can develop to be transferred to the baby and offer protection after birth. The vaccination is given with a single dose of the vaccine.

## **Is the vaccination against RSV in pregnancy safe?**

Yes, vaccination is both safe and effective in protecting new-borns from severe RSV infections. After vaccination, vaccine site soreness, headache and muscle pain may occur, but these symptoms are usually mild and short-lived.

## **Will I be able to breastfeed after vaccination?**

Yes, as the RSV vaccination during pregnancy does not affect breastfeeding. There were no adverse effects in new-borns who were breastfed by mothers vaccinated against RSV.

