

No health worries for children born to mothers given seasonal flu vaccine in pregnancy

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A population-based study, published today in *JAMA*, has found flu vaccination during pregnancy does not lead to an increased risk of

adverse early childhood health outcomes.

Although pregnant people are not more susceptible to acquiring [influenza infection](#), they are at an increased risk of severe illness and complications if they get the flu during [pregnancy](#). For this reason, all pregnant people are advised to receive a flu shot each year, yet only 36 percent received it according to a study monitoring four flu seasons in Nova Scotia. Safety concerns are reportedly a leading reason people may not receive influenza vaccination in pregnancy.

Dr. Deshayne Fell, an Associate Professor of Epidemiology in the Faculty of Medicine at uOttawa and a Scientist at the CHEO Research Institute, a pediatric healthcare and research centre, led the study along with researchers in Ontario and at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia. The study followed over 28,000 children from birth up to an average age of 3 ½ years, with the results suggesting that maternal influenza vaccination during pregnancy was not associated with:

- Immune-related health conditions, such as asthma, ear infections or other types of infection.
- Non-immune-related health problems like neoplasms, sensory impairment.
- Nonspecific health needs such as Emergency Department visits and hospitalizations did not increase.

"This study adds to what we know from other recent studies showing no harmful effects of [flu vaccination](#) during pregnancy on the longer-term health of children," says Dr. Fell, whose other recent work includes studying the effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy. "This is important because we know that getting the flu shot during pregnancy not only protects the pregnant person, but has the added bonus of protecting newborn babies from getting the flu during their first few months of life, which is when they are most susceptible to

respiratory infections but still too young to get the [flu shot](#) themselves."

The study, "Association of Maternal Influenza Vaccination During Pregnancy with Early Childhood Health Outcomes," is published in *JAMA*.

More information: Azar Mehrabadi et al, Association of Maternal Influenza Vaccination During Pregnancy With Early Childhood Health Outcomes, *JAMA* (2021). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2021.6778](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2021.6778)

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