



DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Date: December 6, 2012

To: Prenatal Care Providers, Primary Care Providers, Infectious Disease Physicians, Infection Preventionists, Local Health Departments, Tribal Health Clinics and Pharmacists

From: Jeffrey P. Davis, MD, Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases and Emergency Response

Re: Importance of Vaccinating Pregnant Women against Seasonal Influenza

The influenza season is off to an earlier and more severe start in Wisconsin than during recent seasons. As of December 3, statewide 26 persons have been hospitalized with influenza and four of these hospitalizations occurred among unvaccinated pregnant women. Pregnant women with influenza are at a substantially greater risk of hospitalization, and death, than non-pregnant women. Severe influenza in a pregnant woman also increases her risk of premature labor and delivery.

Vaccination against seasonal influenza affords protection to the pregnant woman and also helps to protect her infant for up to 6 months following birth. This is important because infants aged <6 months cannot be vaccinated against influenza. Therefore, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends routine influenza vaccination (with trivalent inactivated vaccine) during influenza season (early October through late March) for pregnant women or those planning a pregnancy.

Receiving advice from a healthcare provider plays a critical role in a pregnant woman's decision to get vaccinated against seasonal influenza. According to November, 2012 survey data collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 98% of pregnant women surveyed reported visiting a doctor or other health professional at least once since July 1, 2012. Among these women, 74% of those who received both a recommendation and an offer to provide the influenza vaccination were vaccinated. In contrast, 45% of those who received a recommendation but not an offer to provide the vaccination were vaccinated and only 15% of those who did not receive a recommendation or offer to provide the influenza vaccination were vaccinated. This highlights the positive impact on vaccine coverage that could be made if more providers recommended and offered influenza vaccination.

We request your help to ensure that your pregnant patients are vaccinated against influenza. You play a crucial role in helping to prevent influenza and its severe complications among your patients and their infants. If you are unable to offer the influenza vaccine to your pregnant

patients, please refer them to their primary care provider, local health department, pharmacy or use the Flu Vaccine Finder at www.flu.gov to find where your patient can receive influenza vaccine as soon as possible.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Dan Hopfensperger, the Wisconsin Immunization Program Manager, at (608)266-1339 or dan.hopfensperger@wi.gov.

Additional information:

1. Pregnant Women Need a Flu Shot

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/flushot_pregnant_factsheet.pdf

2. Guidelines for Vaccinating Pregnant Women

http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/downloads/b_preg_guide.pdf