

# PREGNANCY AND FLU:

2025



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The flu can be dangerous during pregnancy because of the changes your body goes through. Pregnancy affects your immune system, heart and lungs, and a lowered immune system makes you more susceptible to infections. You also need more oxygen, and as your baby grows, your lungs are put under pressure and have less space to work efficiently. Your heart must also work harder to supply blood to both you and your baby.

If you're pregnant or had a baby within the last two weeks, you're more likely to experience serious health complications from the flu. It can also cause pregnancy-specific problems for both you and your baby. So, if you experience any flu symptoms, it's important to seek medical advice.

### PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR BABY

The best way to prevent flu is with the vaccine, which is safe and effective during pregnancy. The flu vaccine can also benefit your baby as flu-fighting antibodies pass to your baby through the placenta. Breast milk delivers those same antibodies, providing more protection from the flu after birth.

If you fall ill with flu, the earlier you seek treatment for your symptoms, the better your chances of preventing them from getting worse. Speak with your healthcare provider about medicine you can use and be sure to stay well hydrated and rested. It's especially important that you seek medical help if you have a fever.

### Seek immediate medical assistance should you experience any of the following:

- No movement from your baby
- Seizures
- Breathing difficulties

### SUPPORTING YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM DURING PREGNANCY

There are several ways you can help strengthen your immune system while pregnant:

1



#### EAT A BALANCED DIET

Eat a well-balanced and nutritious diet to provide your body with the essential vitamins and minerals needed to stay fit and well throughout your pregnancy:

- Include a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats
- Limit highly processed foods
- Don't restrict any particular food group from your meal plans – include carbs, dairy (if you're not lactose-intolerant), and healthy fats

2



#### STAY WELL HYDRATED

Hydration is important for overall health, particularly throughout pregnancy. Aim to drink an extra 300ml of fluids per day, on top of the usual 2–3 litres. This includes water, other drinks, and food with high water content like fruits, vegetables and soups. Food accounts for around 20% of our daily fluid intake, so make sure to drink sufficient water and other healthy drinks throughout the day to stay properly hydrated.

3



#### CONSIDER TAKING SUPPLEMENTS

While a well-balanced diet should be your main source of nutrients during pregnancy, supplements can help if you have dietary restrictions or specific needs. Speak to your healthcare provider about:

- Folic acid
- Iron
- Calcium
- Magnesium
- Omega-3 (for your baby's development)
- Vitamins D and C (to support your immune system)

4



#### EXERCISE REGULARLY

Unless otherwise advised by your healthcare provider, moderate aerobic and strength exercises are an excellent way to stay fit and healthy, and boost your immune system.

5



#### GET PLENTY OF QUALITY SLEEP

Sleep, especially the deep phase known as slow wave sleep, plays a crucial role in regulating our immune system. Poor quality sleep during pregnancy can reduce overall health and wellbeing.

6



#### TRY TO MANAGE STRESS LEVELS

Studies have shown that stress, particularly prolonged stress, can weaken your immune system and increase your risk of illness. It may also affect your baby's development.

7



#### KEEP GERMS AT BAY

While your immune system is working hard to keep you and your baby healthy throughout the course of your pregnancy, you can do your bit by washing your hands regularly and avoiding close contact with anyone who seems sick.

8



#### STAY UP TO DATE WITH VACCINATIONS

As your immune system changes during pregnancy, you're likely to be more susceptible to infections. Keeping up to date with your recommended vaccinations helps protect both you and your baby.

If you're unsure about any flu symptoms, vaccines, or supplements during pregnancy, it's always best to consult your healthcare provider. Taking a few simple steps can make a big difference in keeping you and your baby safe and healthy.