Influenza A (H1N1) in Pregnancy

H1N1 formerly called "swine flu" is a new influenza virus causing sickness in people. The H1N1 virus is different from seasonal influenza viruses. However, the H1N1 symptoms are similar to seasonal influenza, and it is easily spread from person to person.

Pregnancy weakens the immune system, making it easier to catch infections and the H1N1 virus. Also, as the baby grows, the mother has less lung function. When there is less lung function, the mother is more likely to suffer from pneumonia, have kidney failure or a blood clot to the lung if they catch the flu. Currently, a vaccine is being produced to protect people from getting the H1N1 flu. It is safe for the mother and fetus. **Pregnant women should not take the nasal mist vaccine** because the spray contains the live virus, even though it's strength is weakened (*attenuated*). **If you are pregnant and think you have H1N1, call your caregiver right away.** The CDC and the World Health Organization are following reported cases around the world.

CAUSE

- The flu is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- A person may become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

SYMPTOMS

- Fever.
- Headache.
- Tiredness.
- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Body aches.
- Diarrhea and vomiting

These symptoms are referred to as “flu-like symptoms.” A lot of different illnesses, including the common cold, may have similar symptoms.

DIAGNOSIS

- There are tests that can tell if you have the H1N1 virus.
- Confirmed cases of H1N1 will be reported to the state or local health department.
- A doctor's exam may be needed to tell whether you have an infection that is a complication of the flu.

TREATMENT

- Start treatment as soon as possible when symptoms occur.
- Get a lot of sleep and rest.
- Drink a lot of fluids.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Take your vitamins and mineral supplements as recommended.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines as directed by your caregiver.
- Take medication, Tamiflu or Relenza that help fight the flu with the permission of your caregiver. They are safe to take when pregnant.

PREVENTION

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your arm when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based

cleaners are also effective against germs.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. This is one way germs spread.
- Try to avoid contact with sick people. Follow public health advice regarding school closures. Avoid crowds.
- Stay home if you get sick. Limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. People infected with the H1N1 virus may be able to infect others anywhere from 1 day before feeling sick to 5-7 days after getting flu symptoms.
- An H1N1 vaccine is available to help protect against the virus. In addition to the H1N1 vaccine, you will need to be vaccinated for seasonal influenza. The H1N1 and seasonal vaccines may be given on the same day.

FACEMASKS

In community and home settings, the use of facemasks and N95 respirators are not normally recommended. In certain circumstances, a facemask or N95 respirator may be used for persons at increased risk of severe illness from influenza. Your caregiver can give additional recommendations for facemask use.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Stay informed. Visit the CDC website for current recommendations. Visit www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/. You may also call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).
- If you are pregnant, talk to your caregiver as soon as you develop flu-like symptoms.
- If you get the flu, get plenty of rest, drink enough water and fluids to keep your urine clear or pale yellow, and avoid using alcohol or tobacco.
- You may take over-the-counter medicine to relieve the symptoms of the flu if your caregiver approves.
- Avoid mingling in large crowds and crowed places.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Cover you face when coughing or sneezing.
- Wear a mask and stay at a good distance if someone in your family has the swine flu.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid people who are sick.
- Stay home from work or school if you are getting sick.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You feel like you are getting the flu, see the symptoms stated above.
- If you develop a temperature a fever with or without chills.
- You think someone in your family is getting the flu.
- You have come in contact with someone who has the swine flu.
- You want advice on what medications are safe to take or you need a prescription for medication.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your flu-like symptoms improve but return with fever and worse cough.
- You develop a temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- You are short of breath or have a hard time breathing.
- You have vaginal bleeding.
- You do not feel the baby moving or the baby is moving less than usual.
- You develop uterine contractions.
- You have leaking or a gush of fluid from the vagina.
- You develop severe or persistent vomiting.
- You feel dizzy, confused or turn bluish in color.
- You have pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen.

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