

TO: EZIZ Users
FROM: CDPH
SUBJECT: Protect pregnant women with influenza vaccine
DATE: 11/22/16

Dear EZIZ users,

Pregnant women are at higher risk of severe influenza, which can lead to hospitalization, maternal death, premature birth, and other obstetric complications.^[1] During the 2010-16 flu seasons in California, at least 41 pregnant women were admitted into an intensive care unit (ICU) and 4 died. In addition, at least 152 infants less than 6 months of age were admitted into an ICU, and 11 babies died.^[2]

To protect infants too young to be vaccinated as well as their mothers, the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) (ACOG) recommends that **all women who are, or will be, pregnant during the flu season receive inactivated influenza vaccination**. The California Department of Public Health urges each prenatal care provider to have a prenatal flu vaccination program that includes the following activities:

1. If vaccinating on-site in your clinic:

- a. **Implement clinic protocols**, such as standardized nursing procedures, to immunize all women who are, or will be, pregnant during the flu season.
- b. **Meet with staff** regularly to ensure they know the latest recommendations. Educate staff about the importance of flu vaccine and other vaccines. Create a culture of immunization at your practice.
- c. **Strongly recommend** flu vaccine to all prenatal patients every season, regardless of trimester, stressing the importance and safety for mother and baby. Use a statement rather than a question: "Looks like you're due for a flu shot. We can take care of it today."
- d. **Document** recommendation and receipt of vaccination or patient declination (if applicable).
- e. **Uphold the same standard of care for all women in your practice** by offering flu vaccination to all patients, regardless of payer. Call your provider relations representative if you are having trouble with reimbursement.
- f. **Ensure adequate vaccine supply.** If your clinic is non-profit and you need additional flu vaccine this season, contact your local health department (<http://bit.do/immunization>) about the possibility of ordering no cost flu vaccine.

2. If currently unable to vaccinate on-site in your clinic:

- a. **Strongly consider stocking flu vaccine.** [Prenatal patients are more likely to be vaccinated if their providers stock flu vaccine.](#) See ACOG's resources about starting your own [office-based immunization program](#). If you are a non-profit entity, contact your local health department (<http://bit.do/immunization>) about the possibility of ordering no cost flu vaccine.

^[1] <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>

^[2] CDPH, Immunization Branch, unpublished data.

- b. **Make a strong recommendation and referral** to receive flu vaccination off-site. See CDC's piece on [Making a Strong Referral for Pregnant Women](#) for key steps and messaging.
- c. **Assist patients in locating a local immunizer that is covered by their insurance.** Medi-Cal Fee for Service (FFS) and Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) are required to have all routine ACIP-recommended adult immunizations, including influenza vaccination, as part of their pharmacy formulary benefit. For each patient who needs an off-site referral for influenza vaccine, request that your office manager contact health plans' member services with the patient to locate local vaccinators.
 - i. Medi-Cal MCPs: the member services number is located on the back of the Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card.
 - ii. Medi-Cal FFS: call 1-800-541-5555 or (if calling from a non-California area code) 916-636-1980.
- d. **Provide patients with a prescription.** Although a prescription for flu vaccine is not needed, it may reinforce the importance of your recommendation. Order copies of a [pre-filled immunization RX-pad \(IMM-1143\)](#) from your local health department (<http://bit.do/immunization>).
- e. **When referring patients to be vaccinated off-site, ensure patients' ability to travel to the off-site location and that the clinic or pharmacy will administer flu vaccine to your patient:**
 - i. Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) are [contractually obliged to provide members under age 21 with free transportation services for immunization visits](#).
 - ii. If your practice is having difficulty ensuring that Medi-Cal MCP members receive flu vaccination, contact the respective plan's [provider services number](#).
 - iii. For issues that cannot be resolved by calling the Medi-Cal MCP, please contact the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) [Office of the Ombudsman](#) at 1-888-452-8609 during office hours or MMCDOmbudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov. DHCS recommends calling the Ombudsman for any issues that require the inclusion of confidential data. If your issue is still not resolved, please contact [your local health department](#) or the CDPH Immunization Branch at IZBranch@cdph.ca.gov or (510) 620-3737.
 - iv. **Follow-up at subsequent appointments** to ensure that pregnant women receive flu vaccination as early as possible during flu season. Keep urging the mother to get vaccinated.
 - v. **Document** recommendation and receipt of vaccination or patient declination (if applicable).

3. To reinforce your recommendations, provide patient education materials in waiting rooms and exam rooms:

- a. "Flu and Whooping Cough poster for Pregnant Women" in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Chinese](#)
- b. "Expecting? Protect yourself and your baby against flu and whooping cough!" in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Chinese](#)
- c. "Immunizations for a Healthy Pregnancy" in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [Chinese](#)
- d. Visit EZIZ.org for [additional influenza prevention materials](#). Many of these materials can be ordered for FREE from your [local health department](#).

4. **Stay informed about the latest influenza immunization guidelines and data:**
- a. Learn more about the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice's [current guidelines](#).
 - b. Review the latest [California Influenza Surveillance Reports](#) and other resources related to influenza.

^[1] <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>

² CDPH, Immunization Branch, unpublished data.

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