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](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](http://bit.do/immunization)) about the possibility of ordering no cost flu vaccine.

[1] [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm)
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)](http://bit.do/immunization) from your local health department.

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 [MMCDOMombudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:MMCDOMombudsmanOffice@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](mailto: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](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm).
   b. Review the latest [California Influenza Surveillance Reports](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/IIS/TrendingSurveillance/Pages/InfluenzaSurveillanceReport.aspx) and other resources related to influenza.

[1] [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm)


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