

North Carolina Women's Hospital

Influenza and Your Baby (Flu)

The staff at North Carolina Women's Hospital is committed to protecting the health of you and your baby. Many women and families have heard a lot about the flu. Here are some commonly asked questions and answers about the flu.

What is the flu?

The flu is a virus that affects the nose, throat, and lungs. It is spread when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes, or speaks and other people breathe in the virus. It is also spread when a person touches something, such as a used tissue, that has flu virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Why is the flu important for newborn babies?

Newborn babies are at high risk for developing very serious problems from the flu. Lung infections such as pneumonia can be severe for newborn babies.

How can I prevent my newborn baby from getting the flu?

The single best way to prevent your baby from getting the flu is to keep anyone who has the flu or has symptoms of the flu at least three feet away from your baby. Practicing good hand washing, covering your mouth and nose while sneezing, and throwing away tissues in a trash can will also help prevent the spread of illness to your baby. If you have the flu or have symptoms of the flu, allow someone who does not have the flu to care for your baby. If no one is available to help you, wear a mask and wash your hands before and after holding the baby, changing the baby's diaper and bathing the baby.

How do I know if my newborn baby has the flu?

Your baby may have the flu if he/she has a fever of 101°F (38°C), cough, runny or stuffy nose, is extremely sleepy or is not interested in feeding. The symptoms of the flu are very similar to many other illnesses common in the wintertime. It is very hard to know if your baby has the flu, the common cold, or another respiratory illness. Your baby's health care provider (baby's doctor) can perform a test to determine if your baby has the flu.

When should I call my baby's health care provider (baby's doctor)?

You should call your baby's health care provider if your baby has a fever. Try not to take your baby out in public at all. Do not bring your baby to the hospital unless you have called your baby's health care provider.

If my baby gets sick this flu season, how should I take care of them?

First, you should call your baby's health care provider. You should feed your baby breast milk or formula at least every 2-3 hours. If your baby has a fever you can give him or her **infant** acetaminophen (such as **Infant** Tylenol ®) or **infant** Ibuprofen (such as **Infant** Motrin ®) as directed by your baby's health care provider.

If I have the flu, can my baby still receive my breast milk?

Yes, it is important for your baby to continue getting your breast milk. The flu is not passed through breast milk. Wash your hands and wear a mask over your nose and mouth before uncovering your breasts and when breastfeeding your baby. Always wash your hands before and after breastfeeding.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact your baby's health care provider or UNC Pediatric Urgent Care (919) 966-1405 or the UNC Hospital Newborn Nursery at (919) 966-3487

This information was adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Key Facts about the Flu* and *Questions & Answers: The Disease* from www.cdc.gov/flu and UNC UOG *Common Problems in Pregnancy and Recommended Treatments*

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