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LEADING PHYSICIAN GROUPS URGE PREGNANT WOMEN TO GET BOTH FLU VACCINES

Pregnant women have high-risk for serious complications from the seasonal flu and H1N1

CHICAGO – To help stress the urgent message that pregnant women must get vaccinated against both seasonal influenza and 2009 H1N1 to protect themselves and their unborn baby, the American Medical Association (AMA), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) joined forces today. In a group letter sent to health care professionals nationwide, leaders from the four groups emphasized the increased number of deaths among pregnant women from influenza and provided helpful information for medical professionals.

The letter urges health care professionals to encourage their pregnant patients to get vaccinated and counsel them on the benefits of the vaccine. Both the seasonal influenza vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine are safe to administer to pregnant women in any trimester and can be given simultaneously. Pregnant women should be given the flu shot, not the nasal spray version of the vaccine.

“Pregnant women carry a heightened risk for serious complications and death from the flu,” said AMA Board of Trustees Member Mary Ann McCaffree, M.D. “We need to counsel our patients so that they understand that the vaccines are safe and that getting vaccinated is the single best way to protect them and their babies from the flu.”

"It is critical that physicians talk with their pregnant patients about all of the immunizations recommended during pregnancy and in the postpartum period," said AAFP President Lori Heim, M.D. "Right now it is even more important for physicians to educate pregnant women to be immunized for both H1N1 and seasonal flu. Pregnant women are four times more likely to be hospitalized from novel H1N1 influenza, but that risk can be lessened through vaccination."

“ACOG is taking an active role in encouraging obstetrician-gynecologists to vaccinate their pregnant patients against both the seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu,” said ACOG President Gerald F. Joseph, Jr., M.D. “We need to ensure that all pregnant women understand the seriousness to both their health and the health of their fetus if they become ill with the flu.”

To view the joint letter and for more information on pregnancy and the flu visit:

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/h1n1/vaccination-information/pregnant-women.shtml>

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