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Adjuvant Versus Non-Adjuvant H1N1 Vaccine for Pregnant Women

The purpose of this fact sheet is to clarify the difference between an adjuvanted and non-adjuvanted vaccine and whether or not pregnant women should receive one or the other.

THE FACTS

- An adjuvant is a substance that helps stimulate the body's immune response; it helps boost and speed up the body's ability to fight a virus. It is a natural product made of fish oil, water and vitamin E.
- While it is the first time an adjuvant is being used in an influenza vaccine, these adjuvants have been used in other vaccines for decades.
- All countries are stating that both types of vaccine are safe.
- After discussion with the Public Health Agency of Canada, and based on the evidence for other adjuvanted vaccines as well as experience around the world to date with the adjuvanted H1N1 vaccine, Canadian experts say that both the adjuvanted and non-adjuvanted H1N1 vaccines are safe for pregnant women.

Therefore, pregnant women should be offered the choice to receive an adjuvanted or non-adjuvanted vaccine based on the following considerations, not safety concerns.

Considerations for Pregnant Women	Adjuvant H1N1 Vaccine	Non-Adjuvant H1N1 Vaccine
• Amount of viral inoculate required to protect an individual	• Lower dose (4 times less viral material than the non-adjuvanted vaccine)	• Higher dose (4 times more viral material than the adjuvanted vaccine)
• Number of doses required to achieve immunity	• 1	• 1
• Cross-protection against mutations of the virus	• Possible	• None

More important than the decision about which H1N1 vaccine a pregnant woman should take is the decision to get vaccinated, regardless of the vaccine type selected. The risk of serious complications due to the H1N1 virus exists in all trimesters of pregnancy and increases as the pregnancy advances. The non-adjuvanted vaccine is recommended for use by pregnant women at any gestational age, whether the woman is healthy or has underlying health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, hypertension, etc.

SOGC RECOMMENDATIONS

For pregnant women over 20 weeks gestation

- Get vaccinated against H1N1 as soon as a vaccine (adjuvanted or non-adjuvanted) is available.

For pregnant women under 20 weeks gestation

- If you are healthy, wait to receive the non-adjuvanted H1N1 vaccine (expected to be available in early November).
- If you have a chronic health condition (diabetes, asthma, hypertension, etc.), get vaccinated against H1N1 as soon as a vaccine (adjuvanted or non-adjuvanted) is available.
- If you reside in an area where H1N1 flu rates are high or increasing, get vaccinated against H1N1 as soon as a vaccine (adjuvanted or non-adjuvanted) is available.