

Influenza: *Safe measures for babies and moms*

What is influenza?

Influenza [in-floo-EN-zuh]—called the **flu** for short—is a common respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus. The flu is different from a cold. It usually comes on suddenly and includes many of these symptoms:

- Fever, chills
- Muscle or body aches
- Cough
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Runny or stuffy nose

How serious is the flu?

Most people with the flu need no medical treatment and recover on their own. However, some people develop complications from the flu. They can become very ill and may even die.

Certain people or groups have a higher risk for flu complications. Higher-risk groups include pregnant women, infants, and children younger than 5 years.

For this reason, Intermountain follows national guidelines to protect new babies and their mothers in all hospital labor, delivery, and postpartum settings.

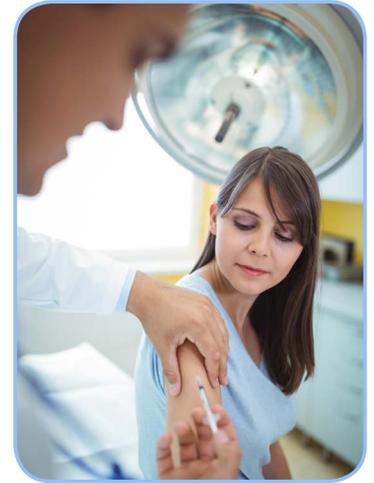
What are Intermountain's flu safety measures for moms and babies?

To help protect babies and their mothers, hospital staff follow the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This means that as an expectant or new mom, you can expect special safety measures when there is flu activity. (See the next page, "How is the flu diagnosed?"). These measures help limit the spread of the virus and protect you, your baby, and your family.

Your healthcare team may ask you and your family to follow hospital rules designed to limit infections. For example, visitors with symptoms of illness should not visit you and your baby in the hospital.

If your team knows or believes that you may have the flu, you can expect the following special care:

- **If you're hospitalized during your pregnancy, you'll be placed in a private room.** People entering your room will need to wear masks and sanitize their hands. In some cases, staff and visitors will also need to wear gowns and gloves.
- **During labor and delivery, everyone entering your hospital room will need to wear masks and sanitize their hands.** Anyone who may come into contact with you, your body fluids, or your baby will need to wear gowns and gloves as well.
- **After your baby is born, you and your baby will be placed in separate rooms.** Your doctor can tell you how long the separation may be needed to protect your newborn. During this time, someone else—such as a nurse or a healthy family member—will feed your baby. For these feedings, you can express (pump) your own milk, if you plan to breastfeed. Visitors to both your room and your baby's room may be restricted.



How is the flu diagnosed?

The flu is diagnosed by evaluating your symptoms and testing a sample of mucus from your nose. Your healthcare provider will take the sample by doing a quick swab inside your nostril. The sample will be sent to the hospital lab. Results are usually ready in a few hours.

While the medical team waits for the results of your flu test, the safety measures described on page 1 of this handout will continue. If your results say you don't have the flu, the team will stop these extra measures.

How is the flu treated?

Most often, the body must recover from flu on its own. However, for newborns and pregnant or postpartum women, antiviral medicine may be needed to help prevent complications. **(Antibiotics won't work on a viral infection like the flu.)** If test results show that you, your baby, or both of you have the flu, your doctor can discuss treatment and care with you.

If I'm sick, how is my baby kept safe?

If you have suspected or confirmed flu, the hospital team will watch your newborn carefully for any signs or symptoms of infection. If they have concerns that your baby is infected, they'll use the same precautions listed on the first page—masks, gowns, gloves, and so on. And of course, a baby with influenza will also receive appropriate treatment.

When can we go home?

Your doctor can advise you when it's okay for you and your baby to go home. Before leaving, your healthcare team will give instructions for caring for yourself and your baby at home. For example, you may need to:

- Continue wearing a mask and practicing other safety measures until you're feeling better.
- Have another healthy adult continue to feed your baby until it's safe for you to do it.
- Monitor your baby for signs and symptoms of flu, and follow up with your baby's doctor right away about any concerns.



5 steps to prevent the flu

Follow these steps to help protect you, your family, and your community—whether at home or in the hospital:

- 1 Wash your hands—often and well.** At the very least, wash before and after every meal and bathroom trip.
- 2 Get your flu shot.** Everyone older than 6 months should get a seasonal flu shot every year—pregnant women included. Make sure that everyone who cares for your baby gets the flu shot, too, including grandparents, babysitters, and daycare staff. Most health insurance plans cover a flu shot each year.
- 3 Know when to keep your distance from others.** If you've got a cold or the flu, try to stay home and rest. Do NOT go to the hospital to welcome a new baby or to visit anyone else. Avoid public places, and skip the baby showers and "welcome home baby" visits until your symptoms are gone.
- 4 Cover your coughs and sneezes.** Cough or sneeze into your elbow rather than your hands. If you use a tissue, throw it away after one use and then wash your hands.
- 5 Limit your baby's social life.** Babies and young children can be more likely to catch many sicknesses, not just the flu. Keep your baby out of crowds, especially in the first months of life. Limit visitors.



When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if either you or your baby show signs or symptoms of the flu.

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