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Vaccinations and Pregnancy

Vaccinations are an important way to decrease the frequency of disease outbreaks in the community. If the majority of healthy people are vaccinated against potentially preventable diseases, it helps to protect those people who are more vulnerable by minimising outbreaks. This includes pregnant women and their unborn baby, newborns and sick people who are unable to be vaccinated eg those who are immunosuppressed.

A logical time to see if vaccinations are up to date is when planning a pregnancy. General Practitioners are experts in this, and a pre-pregnancy consultation is a good idea. The vaccinations that are often recommended are:

1. Tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough (DTP)
2. Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)
3. Influenza vaccine (Fluvax)

Other vaccines such as haemophilus, meningococcal, varicella may be required depending on circumstances and advice.

After being vaccinated it is recommended to wait 28 days before conceiving.

If before boosters are given, you realise you are already pregnant, vaccinations such as the DTP and MMR, can be administered before going home from hospital, after having your baby. The vaccines are all safe with breastfeeding. The Fluvax however, is recommended to be given during pregnancy if you are pregnant in the influenza season. This provides protection for the pregnant woman, who is more likely to be quite sick if she contracts the 'flu' and also protects her newborn against the virus.

The Australian Immunisation handbook is a good source of information on this.

<http://immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook-specialrisk232>

Partners, babysitters, grandparents and other close contacts should also consider being vaccinated during the woman's pregnancy.

Good hand hygiene, avoiding kisses, especially from children who are not your own, and keeping a distance of at least 1 metre from anyone who is unwell, also helps to minimise disease transmission.

The 'Blue Book' is given on discharge from hospital after having a baby in NSW (it is a different colour in other states) and it contains the childhood vaccination schedule.