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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	• Possibly multiple doses
• 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 SOGC recommends that all pregnant women over 20 weeks gestation and those less than 20 weeks with underlying risk conditions be vaccinated against H1N1 as soon as a vaccine is available, whether or not it includes an adjuvant. In areas where H1N1 flu rates are high or increasing, health-care providers should offer immediate vaccination with adjuvanted vaccines and not wait for non-adjuvanted vaccines which may only be available in November.