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News Release

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Immediate Release

Pregnant? Protect Your Baby and Yourself – Get a Flu Shot

Kingsford, Michigan – December 2, 2013. In recognition of National Influenza Vaccination Week, December 8-14, 2013 the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department is taking this opportunity to tell the community how important it is to get an annual influenza vaccination.

Finding out you're pregnant can be one of the most exciting and overwhelming times in a woman's life. As you revel in the newfound joy of soon becoming a mom, whether it's your first baby or your fourth, it's only natural to start thinking about what you need to do to protect and keep your baby healthy. Knowing that the flu can cause serious illness that could harm you and your baby, getting yourself a flu shot should be a priority.

The risk of serious complications from the flu is greater for pregnant women because pregnancy can reduce the ability of the lungs and the immune system to work normally. This makes pregnant women more likely to become severely ill with the flu than women who are not pregnant. This can be bad for both you and your baby—pregnant women with the flu also have a greater chance for serious problems for their unborn baby, including premature labor and delivery.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone get a yearly flu vaccine, the agency has a special message for pregnant women: "Please don't pass up this chance to protect yourself and your baby against the flu," says Joyce Ziegler, RNC, Community Health Services Director at the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department.

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The flu shot is given in a single dose, is safe, and cannot cause the flu. “Getting a flu vaccine during pregnancy can reduce the risk of getting the flu while pregnant and after,” says Ziegler. “And babies younger than six months can get very sick from the flu, but are too young to get vaccinated.” The best way to protect them is to have their caregivers and close contacts vaccinated, and for their mother to get the flu shot during pregnancy. Studies have shown that getting a flu shot during pregnancy can decrease your baby’s chance of getting the flu for up to 6 months after birth.

“Pregnant women should get a flu shot, not the nasal spray vaccine,” says Ziegler. A flu shot can be safely given during any month of pregnancy. Breastfeeding mothers can get either a flu shot or the nasal spray vaccine.

For more information about influenza and the influenza vaccination visit www.cdc.gov/flu. For an appointment for the influenza vaccination contact your healthcare provider or the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department at (906)774-1868 or (906)265-9913.

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Seasonal flu shots have been given safely to millions of pregnant women over many years. As in previous years, vaccine companies are making preservative-free flu vaccine as an option for pregnant women and small children.

Usually worse than the common cold, the flu can cause fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and weakness. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. If you think you may have the flu, it's important to call your doctor or nurse right away. They may be able to prescribe medicines (antiviral drugs) to reduce the severity of your flu illness and shorten the length of time that you are sick.

For more information, talk to your doctor go to www.cdc.gov/flu.