Flu Shots Work for Pregnant Women Regardless of HIV Status

September 9, 2014

The influenza vaccine is just as effective for pregnant women living with HIV as for those without the virus, Reuters reports. Publishing their findings in The New England Journal of Medicine, researchers conducted double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled trials in 2011 and 2012 with 2,237 pregnant women; 188 were HIV positive. After receiving either a flu shot or a placebo, the women, and eventually their newborns as well, were monitored weekly until 24 weeks after their infant was born.

The vaccine reduced the risk of flu by 50.4 percent among HIV-negative women and 48.8 percent among their babies. As for the HIV-positive women, there were 16 confirmed flu cases among those who received the placebo and seven cases among those who received the vaccine, indicating an efficacy rate of 57.7 percent. There were six confirmed cases of the flu among the babies of the HIV-positive women who received the placebo and five cases among the babies of HIV-positive mothers who received the vaccine. This difference was statistically insignificant, meaning it could have occurred by chance.

The flu vaccine is not licensed for babies younger than 6 months of age, who are 50 to 55 times more likely to come down with the flu than the general population.

To read the Reuters story, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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