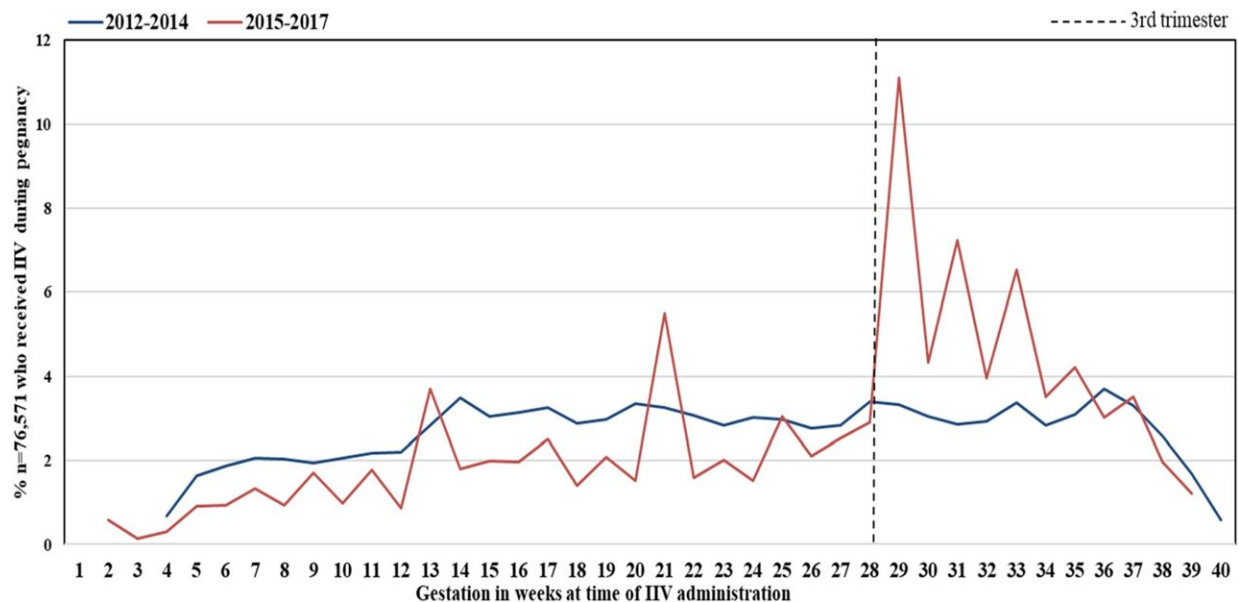


# Urgent review needed on influenza and whooping cough vaccines during pregnancy

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Weeks gestation at time of inactivated influenza (IIV) administration in pre- and post-pertussis-containing vaccines (dTpa) implementation periods (N = 76 571). Credit: *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* (2022). DOI: 10.1111/ajo.13548

University of Queensland researchers are calling for an urgent review of low influenza vaccination rates for pregnant women and whooping cough vaccinations for young and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander mothers-to-be.

The figures were revealed by researchers from the multi-jurisdictional Links2HealthierBubs study, who analyzed the largest observational cohort of mothers with [babies](#) born in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory from 2012 to 2017.

Lead UQ School of Public Health investigator Dr. Lisa McHugh said researchers looked at vaccination rates for almost 600,000 [pregnant women](#).

"Only 15% of the group received the influenza vaccine overall, while 27% were vaccinated against whooping cough," Dr. McHugh said.

"And just 12% received both."

Whooping cough vaccinations in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander pregnancies were 20% lower than non-Indigenous pregnancies, with a similarly lower uptake of the flu vaccine.

"We also found pregnant women younger than 20 years of age were less likely to receive vaccines," Dr. McHugh said.

"These results are concerning, especially since we have a potentially bad influenza season this year."

Influenza vaccines have been recommended, and free, for pregnant women in Australia for decades, as they protect both mothers and newborn babies from severe infection, and whooping cough vaccines were introduced in 2015 to protect babies under 6 months of age.

Dr. McHugh said the likelihood of women receiving both vaccines during pregnancy increased if they attended antenatal care in the first trimester.

"Australia's whooping cough vaccine in pregnancy program has been a key driver of influenza vaccine uptake in pregnancy—except among First Nations women," she said. "First Nations mothers were more likely to have had an [influenza vaccine](#) in pregnancy before the antenatal whooping cough vaccine program, but showed a declining trend following the introduction of whooping cough vaccine.

"Women who are less likely to be receiving the flu vaccine in pregnancy need information about its importance early in pregnancy, so they are equipped with the knowledge to make that choice. Offering the [flu vaccine](#) from a trusted health care provider is a key factor to increasing that uptake.

"An urgent updated review of these data and vaccination strategies is needed before the next influenza pandemic or whooping [cough](#) outbreak occurs."

This paper is published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Journal*.

**More information:** Lisa Mchugh et al, Timing and temporal trends of influenza and pertussis vaccinations during pregnancy in three Australian jurisdictions: The Links2HealthierBubs population-based linked cohort study, 2012–2017, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/ajo.13548](https://doi.org/10.1111/ajo.13548)

Provided by University of Queensland

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