

# SAFEMINDS ALERT: FLU VACCINES WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In March of 2001, the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) issued a statement warning pregnant women and young children not to eat fish containing high levels of mercury because it causes neurological problems in children.

Yet, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends that these same women and young children (ages 6 to 59 months) should get flu shots. Despite what you may have heard, flu shots still contain mercury in the form of the preservative thimerosal. In fact, some flu shots contain more mercury than the EPA recommended safe level for seafood.

SafeMinds is deeply concerned that the risks of mercury-containing flu shots outweigh the benefits for pregnant women, infants and children. Our belief is based on a large-scale scientific study in approximately 50,000 pregnant women and their infants over five flu seasons that found no difference in the risk for developing flu illness among those who received the flu vaccine during pregnancy and those who did not receive the vaccine. Reviews in the medical journal *The Lancet* found a lack of health benefit of influenza vaccine for children under 2 and significantly increased rates of adverse events in children given the influenza vaccine.

In addition, a recent NIH-funded study showed that the type of mercury found in flu shots crosses into the brain of infant primates and results in appreciable levels of mercury being trapped in the brain. Mercury is highly toxic to brain tissue and can interrupt critical stages of brain development.

## IF YOU ARE PREGNANT OR HAVE SMALL CHILDREN ...

- Look at the evidence and decide if you consider the influenza virus a threat to your family.
- If you decide to vaccinate, request mercury-free flu shots for yourself and your children.
- Do not combine the flu vaccine with other vaccines.
- If you are not able to get mercury-free flu vaccines, reconsider your choice.

## WHAT IS THIMEROSAL?

Thimerosal is a mercury-based preservative developed in the 1930s that has been used in as many as 50 vaccines. In the 1982 Federal Register, an expert panel at the FDA reviewed thimerosal and found that it was toxic, caused cell death and called for its removal in over the counter products.

In 2001 the Institute of Medicine, in reviewing the use of thimerosal in vaccines, recommended that "government agencies give full consideration to removing thimerosal from all vaccines administered to infants, children or pregnant women."

You can request thimerosal-free vaccines from your healthcare provider. SafeMinds recommends contacting your health care provider well in advance to ask specifically which brand of vaccine the office ordered, and in which formulation.

The following products are available for the 2006-2007 influenza season. Make sure any vaccine you receive is the mercury-free or reduced mercury version:

- Fluarix GlaxoSmithKline ([contains no mercury](#))
- FluLaval GlaxoSmithKline ([contains 25 mcg of mercury](#))
- FluMist MedImmune ([contains no mercury](#))
- Fluvirin Chiron ([contains 25 mcg of mercury](#))
- Fluzone Sanofi Pasteur - **\*request mercury-free version**
  - Fluzone 5 mL vial - ([contains 25 mcg of mercury](#))
  - Fluzone prefilled syringe - ([contains no mercury](#))

## GET ALL THE FACTS

Keep in mind, all vaccines may pose some risk with or without mercury content. Below are three package inserts for some of the more popular brands.

INFLUENZA VIRUS VACCINE  
FLUARIX™, GLAXOSMITHKLINE  
2005-2006 FORMULA

*Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility: FLUARIX has not been evaluated for carcinogenic or mutagenic potential, or for impairment of fertility.*

*PREGNANCY CATEGORY C. Animal reproduction studies have not been conducted with FLUARIX. It is not known whether FLUARIX can cause fetal harm when administered to a pregnant woman or can affect reproduction capacity. FLUARIX should be given to a pregnant woman only if clearly needed.*

INFLUENZA VIRUS VACCINE  
FLUZONE®, SANOFI-AVENTIS  
2005 – 2006 FORMULA

*PREGNANCY CATEGORY C: Animal reproduction studies have not been conducted with Influenza Virus Vaccine. It is not known whether Influenza Virus Vaccine can cause fetal harm when administered to a pregnant woman or can affect reproduction capacity. Influenza Virus Vaccine should be given to a pregnant woman only if clearly needed. For guidance regarding use in pregnant women, see INDICATIONS AND USAGE section.*

INFLUENZA VIRUS VACCINE  
FLUVIRIN®, Chiron  
2005-2006 FORMULA

*Controlled studies on FLUVIRIN® have not been conducted to demonstrate safety in pregnant women. The clinical judgment of the attending physician should prevail at all times in determining whether to administer the vaccine to a pregnant woman (see PRECAUTIONS, Use in Pregnancy).*

*PREGNANCY CATEGORY C: Animal reproduction studies have not been conducted with Influenza Virus Vaccine (FLUVIRIN®). It is also not known whether Influenza Virus Vaccine (FLUVIRIN®) can cause fetal harm when administered to a pregnant woman or can affect reproduction capacity. Influenza Virus Vaccine (FLUVIRIN®) should be given to a pregnant woman only if clearly needed.*

## KNOW THE FACTS

MERCURY *is*  
a NEUROTOXIN

EPA estimates that one in every six women has levels of mercury in their bodies that could cause harm to their unborn children.

It is inconsistent and unwise to counsel pregnant women to avoid seafood which contains mercury while recommending vaccines which contain mercury.

Mercury rapidly crosses the placenta and accumulates in the fetus at even higher levels than the mother.

Scientific studies have documented that the mercury used in vaccines enters into the brain and can interrupt critical stages of brain development.

Simple techniques such as avoiding those with flu-like illnesses and good handwashing can prevent many cases of the flu.

## ABOUT SAFEMINDS

The Coalition for SafeMinds (Sensible Action for Ending Mercury-Induced Neurological Disorders) is a private nonprofit organization founded to investigate and raise awareness of the risks to infants and children of exposure to mercury from medical products, including thimerosal in vaccines.

Since its inception in 2000, SafeMinds has sponsored almost one million dollars in research related specifically to mercury and adverse neurological outcomes, including autism. This level of financial commitment establishes SafeMinds as the largest private non-profit organization funding mercury and autism related research. For more information please visit [www.safeminds.org](http://www.safeminds.org).



254 Trickum Creek Road  
Tyrone, GA 30290  
Phone: (404) 934-0777  
[www.safeminds.org](http://www.safeminds.org)

## FLU VACCINES what you need to know

You want to do everything right for your child.

You would never knowingly allow someone to inject a neurotoxin into your infant.

Before getting a flu shot, you need to know this:

MERCURY *is*  
a NEUROTOXIN