



A WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF LACTATION PROFESSIONALS

International Lactation Consultant Association

2009 Flu Season Action Ideas for Lactation Consultants

Oct 8, 2009

During flu season when colds, viruses, and other illnesses abound, lactation consultants are an integral part of the healthcare team, and play a pivotal role in helping mothers and babies enjoy optimal health through breastfeeding.

There are many things you can do to prepare yourself, the families you serve, and your colleagues. Here are a few action ideas.

Learn All You Can

It is crucial to learn all you can about both the seasonal flu and the Influenza A (H1N1) virus so you can properly address questions and concerns as it relates to breastfeeding. Recommendations from various health organizations are available, including:

- World Health Organization: “Infection prevention and control in health care for confirmed or suspected cases of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 and influenza-like illnesses”
www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/SwineInfluenza_infectioncontrol.pdf
- U.S. Health and Human Services archived webcast: “What To Do about the Flu: Pregnant Women and New Moms” (August 27, 2009)
www.flu.gov/news/knowwhattodo.html
- New South Wales Department of Health: “Maternity – Influenza Guidelines for Maternity Services”
www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/gl/2009/pdf/GL2009_015.pdf
- CDC: “Pregnant Women and Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus: Considerations for Clinicians”
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/clinician_pregnant.htm
- CDC: “Considerations Regarding Novel H1N1 Virus in Obstetric Settings”
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/obstetric.htm

Promote Vaccinations

- Encourage pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to become immunized for the health and well being of both themselves and their child.
- Realize that pregnant and breastfeeding women are among the population groups that are less inclined to receive vaccinations because they worry about the safety to their infant. You can remind mothers that seasonal flu vaccines, which are *not* a live virus, have a long track record of safety for both mothers and their unborn child that spans several decades. While the H1N1 vaccine is new, it was developed using the same process and is expected to be safe.
- Mothers should receive BOTH the seasonal and H1N1 vaccines.

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Encourage Exclusive Breastfeeding

- Remind pregnant and breastfeeding mothers of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, especially during flu season when illnesses and infections are heightened.
- Revisit policies in maternity care settings that may be obstacles to exclusive breastfeeding.
- Promote the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, which has now been endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, along with numerous other medical and professional organizations worldwide.
- Provide education with health professionals at hospitals, local physician offices, public health clinics, and other venues.

Encourage Mothers to Practice Good Health Habits

- Wash hands frequently soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, especially before handling the baby.
- Cover the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, especially around baby, using a disposable tissue that is discarded immediately.
- Eat nutritious foods and get plenty of rest.
- Report symptoms of the flu to the physician immediately for prompt treatment. Antiviral medications are compatible with breastfeeding and are most effective when they are begun within 48 hours of the beginning of symptoms.

Distribute ILCA Resources

ILCA provides several resources that can be used in your community outreach efforts. These materials are all available as free downloads on the ILCA website at: www.ilca.org

- For Families: “Tips for Parents: How to Keep Baby Well During Flu Season”
- For Media: ILCA Press Release

For more information, contact ILCA at info@ilca.org or call toll-free at: 1-888-ILCA-IS-U