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**HIGHLIGHTS:**

Women who are expecting a baby should be considered high priority during this season when the Flu vaccine is in short supply, and should seek an influenza vaccine as soon as possible. Influenza vaccines do not have adverse effects on fetuses, and they have been shown to dramatically decrease health risks for mothers and their newborns, says Neil S. Silverman, M.D., a high-risk obstetrician who specializes in infectious diseases during pregnancy.

**SPECIALIST SUGGESTS PREGNANT WOMEN REQUEST INFLUENZA VACCINE TO PROTECT BOTH MOM AND BABY**

**LOS ANGELES (Oct. 19, 2004)** – With the current shortage of influenza vaccine, women who are pregnant should be considered a high priority and should seek a flu shot as soon as possible.

Neil S. Silverman, M.D., Medical Director of Inpatient Obstetric Services at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends influenza vaccine for women who are in their second and third trimester of pregnancy. Vaccination is also urged for women in the first trimester who have a medical condition that could be exacerbated by complications of the flu. Influenza vaccination during pregnancy has not been associated with adverse fetal or neonatal effects.

“Women who suffer an influenza infection during pregnancy, particularly in the third trimester, are at high risk for developing serious complications that can impact their health and that of the baby,” says Dr. Silverman. “We have found that many women choose to be vaccinated not only to safeguard themselves and the fetus during pregnancy, but to provide a level of protection for the newborn, as well. Maternal vaccination during pregnancy has been demonstrated to transfer immunity from mother to fetus, which reduces the risks for a baby born during flu season.”

Dr. Silverman suggests women be proactive in asking their obstetricians about vaccination. “Despite the proven benefits of influenza vaccination for both pregnant women and newborns, rates of vaccination for pregnant women have tended to be low from year to year. Pregnant women and those hoping to become pregnant should seriously consider asking about vaccination.”

Board-certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology and in Maternal-Fetal Medicine, Dr. Silverman conducts research on viral infections – including influenza, HIV, hepatitis and cytomegalovirus – during pregnancy. He is a faculty perinatologist in Cedars-Sinai’s Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine, Director of the medical center’s Maternal-Fetal Medicine Fellowship training program, and a Clinical Professor in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the UCLA School of Medicine.

(more)

Dr. Silverman is available to provide additional information related to pregnancy and this year's influenza outbreak. His recent study on the impact of physicians' attitudes toward the flu vaccine on rates of vaccination of pregnant women was published in the *Journal of Reproductive Medicine*. To arrange an interview, please call 1-800-880-2397.

A Magnet Nursing designated facility, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For the fifth straight two-year period, it has been named Southern California's gold standard in health care in an independent survey. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and its broad spectrum of programs and services, as well as breakthroughs in biomedical research and superlative medical education. It ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities and was recently fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP).

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