

# To be vaccinated or not - how does the Internet influence a pregnant woman's decision?

TEACHER'S KEY

## Check your understanding

**1** What is a vaccine? How does it protect us from infectious diseases?

*Answer* Vaccine is a type of medicine prepared with dead or weakened form or part of a bacteria or virus. They cause the immune system to mount a defense which would recognize the microbe if it enters the body again and know how to destroy it. This is called immunity. Once we are immune to a microbe, we don't get sick from this microbe in the future.

**2** What is vaccine confidence? Why could online media lower vaccine confidence?

*Answer* Vaccine confidence is the people's trust that vaccines are safe and efficient. Because of high vaccination coverage, many infectious diseases are under control in the world. New generations are often unaware of the risks of some serious diseases that are being prevented by vaccines. Instead, they focus on the efficiency of certain vaccines and rare cases of side effects. These debates are carried to online media where many people have access. Reading inaccurate negative information about vaccines lower people's vaccine confidence.

**3** Why did the scientists survey pregnant women and health care providers? What did they find?

*Answer* Scientists wanted to see if there is a similarity between women's and healthcare providers' opinions about the vaccines' protection (mother, baby, or both) and how they are portrayed in online articles. They found similar opinions between mothers, healthcare providers, and online articles about the benefits of each vaccine. Which showed the influence of online media in women's decision-making.

**4** Why do more pregnant women get vaccinated against pertussis compared to influenza?

*Answer* Articles on pertussis emphasize the benefits to the baby. They give real-life cases of death. This is a motivation for women to get vaccinated. On the other hand, articles about influenza vaccination focus on the health benefits to the mother. If women are not seeing flu as a threat to the baby, then they don't get the vaccination.

**5** How can healthcare providers help pregnant women who are hesitant to get vaccinated?

*Answer* They can emphasize the importance of vaccination on a baby's health by giving real-life examples, educate mothers about the connectedness of mother's and baby's health and how mother's immunity passes on to the baby and clarify the inaccurate information they may have read online.

Which two themes are present in most of the pertussis articles? How could this influence mother's decision? What about the influenza articles - which two most common themes?

*Answer* Protecting the Newborn and Recent Infections in the Area are the highest percentage among pertussis articles. Since mothers want to protect their babies, and there are recent infections in the area, they are more motivated to get vaccinated. For influenza articles, severity of the disease and protecting self are the highest. These don't encourage mothers enough to get vaccinated. This is why more women have pertussis vaccination than influenza.