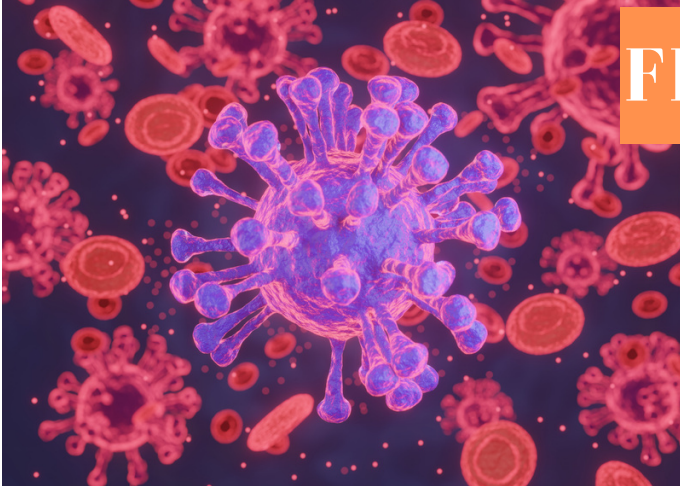


THE FLU: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



FLU INFORMATION

What is the flu?

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses. There are many different influenza viruses that are constantly changing. They cause illness and sometimes hospital stays. Influenza viruses are named for their type and subtype. Influenza viruses that commonly make people sick are **influenza A H1N1 viruses**, **influenza A H3N2 viruses** and **influenza B viruses**. Sometimes a new influenza virus emerges and starts spreading among people.

How serious is the flu?

Flu illness can vary from mild to severe. While the flu can be serious even in people who are otherwise healthy, it can be especially dangerous for young children and children of any age who have certain long term health conditions, including asthma (even mild or controlled), neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions, chronic lung disease, heart disease, blood disorders, endocrine disorders (such as diabetes), kidney, liver, and metabolic disorders, and weakened immune systems due to disease or medication. Children with these conditions and children who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy can have more severe illness from the flu.



How does flu spread?

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by **droplets** made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms of flu can include **fever**, **cough**, **sore throat**, **runny or stuffy nose**, **body aches**, **headache**, **chills**, **fatigue** and sometimes **vomiting** and **diarrhea**. Some people with the flu will not have a fever.

How long can a sick person spread the flu to others?

People with flu may be able to infect others by shedding virus from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. However, children and people with weakened immune systems can shed virus for longer, and might be still contagious past 5 to 7 days of being sick, especially if they still have symptoms

PROTECT YOUR CHILD

What are some of the other ways I can protect my child against the flu?

In addition to getting vaccinated, take – and encourage your child to take – everyday steps that can help prevent the spread of germs. This includes:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- If someone in the household is sick, try to keep the sick person in a separate room from others in the household, if possible.
- Keep surfaces like bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys for children clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.
- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by sick persons in your household in the trash.
- Use a face mask to protect yourself and protect the persons around you.

These everyday steps are a good way to reduce your chances of getting all sorts of illnesses, but vaccination is always the best way to specifically prevent flu.

What should I use for hand cleaning?

Washing hands with soap and water (for as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice) will help protect against many germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.



How can I protect my child against flu?

To protect against the flu, the first and most important thing you can do is to get a flu vaccine for yourself and your child. Vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that young children and children with long term health conditions get vaccinated. Also, caregivers of children with health conditions or children younger than 6 months old should get vaccinated. (Babies younger than 6 months are too young to be vaccinated themselves.) Another way to protect babies is to vaccinate pregnant women because research shows that this gives some protection to the baby both while the woman is pregnant and for a few months after the baby is born. A new flu vaccine is made each year to protect against the three flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during the next flu season. This season's vaccine protects against the H1N1 virus that causes so much illness, an influenza A H3N2 virus, and an influenza B virus. This season's flu vaccine is being made using the same safety and production methods and in the same dose as past flu vaccines. Flu vaccines have a very good safety record.



IF YOUR CHILD IS SICK

What can I do if my child gets sick?

Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness. If your child is 5 years and older and does not have other health problems and gets flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids. If your child is younger than 5 years (and especially younger than 2 years) or of any age with a long term health condition (like asthma, a neurological condition, or diabetes, for example) and develops flu-like symptoms, they are at risk for serious complications from the flu. Ask a doctor if your child should be examined.



What if my child seems very sick?

Even children who have always been healthy before or had the flu before can get a severe case of flu. Call for emergency care or take your child to a doctor right away if your child of any age has any of the warning or emergency signs below:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing.
- Bluish or gray skin color.
- Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or making as much urine as they normally do).
- Severe or persistent vomiting .
- Not waking up or not interacting.
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held.
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
- Has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes, or asthma) and develops flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough.



Can my child go to school, day care or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children or caregivers.

When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F or 37.8°C.

