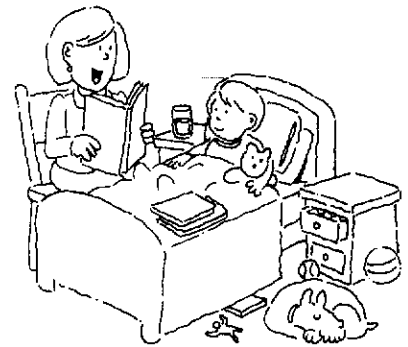


Seasonal Influenza 2010-2011



What is the flu?

Influenza (flu) is an illness caused by a virus. It affects the whole body. The flu season usually starts in the fall and ends in the spring.

People can get the flu many times in their lives. Each year the flu is a little different. Flu viruses can change over time and from year to year. Two seasonal flu viruses and the 2009 influenza A (H1N1) pandemic virus are expected to make children sick again this flu season.

Signs of the flu

All flu viruses cause a respiratory illness that can last a week or more. Flu symptoms include

- A sudden fever (usually above 101°F or 38.3°C)
- Chills and body shakes
- Headache, body aches, and being a lot more tired than usual
- Sore throat
- Dry, hacking cough
- Stuffy, runny nose

Some children may throw up (vomit) and have loose stools (diarrhea). Talk with your child's doctor if your child has ear pain, a cough that won't go away, or a fever that won't go away. There can be serious complications, even death, from the flu, but these are uncommon.

How to prevent the flu

Get the flu vaccine every year

Safe vaccines are made each year to protect against the flu. Last season, 2 different flu vaccines were recommended: the seasonal flu vaccine and the 2009 H1N1 pandemic vaccine. This flu season there is 1 recommended flu vaccine that protects against seasonal flu *and* the 2009 H1N1 pandemic virus. The number of vaccine doses your child should get this year depends on his age at the time the first dose is given and his past flu vaccine history.

Who should get which flu vaccine?

There are 2 types of flu vaccine.

- **Trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (TIV) is given as a shot.** TIV is recommended for all people 6 months and older. Vaccination is especially important for people at higher risk of getting severely ill from the flu and their close contacts, the close contacts of healthy children younger than 5 years, all health care personnel, and all pregnant (or postpartum) women.
- **Live-attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) is sprayed into the nose.** LAIV is recommended for healthy children 2 years and older.

Both types of flu vaccine are very safe and work well to protect your child from the flu. Check with your doctor about which is best for your child and family.

Are there side effects to flu vaccine?

There are very few side effects to the flu vaccine. The area where the TIV flu shot is given may be sore for a day or two. Because LAIV is sprayed into the nose, your child might get a stuffy, runny nose within the first few days.

When should my child get the flu vaccine?

The best time to get the flu vaccine is the early fall or as soon as it is available in your community. If your child does not get the flu vaccine right away, it is still important to get it anytime. The flu virus infects people in the fall, winter, and well into the spring each year. Your child can still be protected if she gets a flu vaccine as late as March, April, or May. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about flu vaccine.

Keep flu germs from spreading

The flu virus spreads easily through the air with coughing and sneezing, and through touching things like doorknobs or toys and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Here are some tips that will help protect your family from getting sick.

1. Everyone should wash hands often. You can use soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. That is about as long as singing the "Happy Birthday" song 2 times. And an alcohol-based hand cleanser or sanitizer works well too. Put enough on your hands to make them all wet, then rub them together until dry.
2. Teach your child to cover his mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Show your child how to cough into the elbow or upper sleeve (not a hand) or use a tissue.
3. Throw all tissues used for runny noses and sneezes in the trash right away.
4. Wash dishes and utensils in hot, soapy water or the dishwasher.
5. Don't let children share pacifiers, cups, spoons, forks, washcloths, or towels without washing. *Never* share toothbrushes.
6. Teach your child to try not to touch her eyes, nose, or mouth.
7. Wash doorknobs, toilet handles, countertops, and even toys. Use a disinfectant wipe or a cloth with soap and hot water. (A *disinfectant* is a cleaner that kills germs.)

What if my child gets the flu?

Call the doctor right away if your child shows any signs of the flu and

- Is 3 months or younger and has a fever.
- Has fast breathing or trouble breathing.
- Looks very sick.
- Is more sleepy than usual.
- Is very fussy no matter what you do.
- Cannot or will not drink anything.
- Urinates (pees) very little.

You should also call the doctor if your child shows signs of the flu and has a chronic medical condition, like

- Asthma, diabetes, or heart problems
- Sickle cell disease, cancer, HIV, or another disease that makes it hard to fight infections
- Cerebral palsy or other neurologic disorders of the brain and muscles that make it harder to cough up mucus and breathe
- Morbid obesity (being very overweight)

Go to the emergency department right away if your child

- Has signs of the flu that keep getting worse.
- Has blue skin color.
- Will not wake up at all.

Drugs to treat the flu

The doctor may be able to treat the flu with an antiviral medicine. These drugs work best if your child gets them within the first 1 to 2 days of showing signs of the flu.

Call the doctor within 24 hours to ask about antiviral drugs if your child is at high risk of influenza complications because he

- Has any serious health problem like asthma, diabetes, sickle cell disease, or cerebral palsy.
- Is younger than 2 years, but especially if younger than 6 months. Young children are at an increased risk of influenza infection, hospitalization, and complications.

Help your child feel better

Extra rest and lots of fluids can help your child feel better. You can also give your child medicine to bring down the fever.

- For a baby 6 months or younger, give acetaminophen. Tylenol is one brand of acetaminophen.
- For a child older than 6 months, give either acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Advil and Motrin are brands of ibuprofen.
- *Never* give any child aspirin. Aspirin puts the child at risk for Reye syndrome, a serious illness that affects the liver and brain.

Keep your child home

Keep your child home from school or child care when she has a fever and other signs of the flu. Your child needs rest. Also, your child can give the flu to other children.

When can my child go back to school or child care?

Your child should stay home at least 24 hours after his fever is gone. Start counting time after you stop giving your child fever medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. A temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher is a sign of fever. Check with your child's school or child care center to find out its rules about children staying home when they are ill.

For more information

Visit the American Academy of Pediatrics parenting Web site, www.healthychildren.org, for the latest news about the flu.

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From your doctor

American Academy
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