

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

HOW SERIOUS IS FLU?

While flu illness can vary from mild to severe, children often need medical care because of flu. Children younger than 5 years and children of any age with certain long-term health problems are at high-risk of flu complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections. Some health problems that are known to make children more vulnerable to flu include asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system.



HOW DOES FLU SPREAD?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly by droplets made when someone with flu coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. A person also can get flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.

WHAT ARE FLU SYMPTOMS?

Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, feeling tired and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). Some people with the flu will not have a fever.

PROTECT YOUR CHILD

HOW CAN I PROTECT MY CHILD FROM FLU?

The first and best way to protect against flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine for yourself and your child.

- Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older every year. Flu shots and nasal sprays are both options.
- It's especially important that young children and children with certain long-term health problems get vaccinated.
- Caregivers of children at high risk of flu complications should get a flu vaccine.
- Flu viruses are constantly changing and so flu vaccines are updated often to protect against the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during a flu season.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GETTING A FLU VACCINE?

- A vaccine can keep you and your child from getting sick.
- Vaccines can keep your child from being hospitalized from flu.
- Vaccine can prevent your child from dying from flu.
- Vaccination also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.
- Getting yourself and your child vaccinated also can also protect others.

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WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD GETS SICK?

Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness. Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids. If your child is 5 years or older and does not have long-term health problems and gets flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed. Children younger than 5 years of age – especially those younger than 2 years – and children with certain long-term health problems (including asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system), are at high risk of serious flu complications. Call your doctor or take your child to the doctor right away if they develop flu symptoms.

WHAT IF MY CHILD SEEMS VERY SICK?

Even healthy children can get very sick from flu. If your child is experiencing the following emergency warning signs, you should go to the emergency room:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with rash

HOW LONG CAN A SICK PERSON SPREAD FLU TO OTHERS?

People with flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to up to 5 to 7 days after. Severely ill people or young children may be able to spread the flu longer, especially if they still have symptoms.

CAN MY CHILD GO TO SCHOOL IF HE OR SHE IS SICK?

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

WHEN CAN MY CHILD GO BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER HAVING FLU?

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

