

Flu Facts *for parents*

Influenza (the flu) is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses. There are many different strains of influenza virus, and they are constantly changing. They cause illness, hospital stays and deaths in the United States each year.

The flu can be very dangerous for children. Each year about 20,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized from flu complications, such as pneumonia.



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

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms of the 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.

Can my child go to school or day care 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 children home 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 (37.8°C) or higher.

How can I protect my child against the flu?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the first and most important thing you can do is to get a flu vaccine for yourself and your child. Talk to your doctor.

- Vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.

What can I do if my child gets sick?

Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

- Children 5 years and older without other health problems: consult your doctor as needed and make sure they get plenty of rest and drink enough fluids.
- Children younger than 5 years (and especially younger than 2 years) or of any age with a long term health condition (like asthma or diabetes, for example) are at risk for serious complications from the flu. Talk to your doctor.

What if my child seems very sick?

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 he or she normally does)
- 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



Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD)
Learn more at www.cdc.gov/flu