



Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs.

It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times, can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. A recent study by the CDC found that children 0-18 years old are the most likely target to get sick from flu.

Flu can be very dangerous for children. CDC estimates that between 6,000 and 26,000 children younger than 5 years have been hospitalized each year in the United States because of influenza. The flu vaccine is safe and helps protect children from flu.

FLU GUIDE

What you need to know

The flu virus is common and unpredictable. It can cause serious complications even in healthy children, being immunized reduces the risk of a child being hospitalized due to flu.

What are the symptoms?

Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and feeling tired. These symptoms can range from mild to severe. Sometimes there will be GI symptoms like vomiting and diarrhea but typically these are very mild.

How can the flu spread?

Flu viruses are thought to spread primarily by droplets made airborne 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 the flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.

What to look out for.

Once someone has been diagnosed with the flu, and they are still running a fever on day 6, it could be caused by 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 certain long-term health problems.

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

How can you protect your family?

The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year. Annual flu vaccines are recommended to protect against influenza. Protection against the flu wears off over time. In addition, the flu strains in the vaccine often change from year-to-year. In order to match the flu viruses expected to be circulating in the community each year, the vaccine is recommended each year.

Those who are most at risk for the flu are:

- Children 6 months of age and older.
- Young children and children with certain long-term health problems.
- Caregivers of children at high risk. (Babies younger than 6 months are at high risk for serious flu complications, but too young to get a flu vaccine.)
- Pregnant women, to protect themselves and their baby from flu. (CDC Research shows that flu vaccination protects the baby from flu for several months after birth.)
- Children with an egg allergy can receive the influenza vaccine with no additional precautions.

Is the flu vaccine safe?

Flu vaccines are made using strict safety and production measures. Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received flu vaccines over the past 50 years, and there has been extensive research supporting the safety of flu vaccines.

Why should my family get the flu vaccine?

- A flu vaccine can keep you and your child from getting sick.
- Flu vaccines can keep your child from being hospitalized from flu. One recent study showed that flu vaccine reduced children's risk of flu-related pediatric intensive care unit admission by 74%.
- Flu vaccine can prevent your child from dying from flu. A study using data from recent flu seasons found that flu vaccine reduced the risk of flu-associated death by half among children with high risk medical conditions and by nearly two-thirds among children without medical conditions.
- Flu vaccination also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.

- Getting yourself and your child vaccinated also can protect others who may be more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies, other young children, and people with certain long-term health problems.

How can I protect my child against the flu?

In addition to getting a flu vaccine, parents and children should take everyday actions to help prevent the spread of germs.

- Stay away from people who are sick as much as possible to keep from getting sick.
- Remember to regularly cover your coughs and sneezes, washhands often, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and clean surfaces that may be contaminated with flu viruses. This is especially true among infants and toddlers who use their hands to wipe their noses or rub their eyes and then handle toys or touch other children
- These everyday actions can help reduce your chances of getting sick and prevent the spread of germs to others if you are sick.
- However, a yearly flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu illness.

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IF YOUR CHILD IS SICK

When to call the doctor

If a child, 5 years or older and does not have a long-term health problem gets flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, call to schedule an appointment.

Children younger than 5 years of age – especially those younger than 2 years – and children that are at high risk of serious flu complications. Call to schedule an appointment right away if they develop flu symptoms.

What if your child gets very sick?

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

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish lips or face Ribs pulling in with each breath
- Chest pain
- Severe muscle pain (child refuses to walk)
- Dehydration (no urine for 8 hours, dry mouth, no tears when crying)



If your child does become ill or exhibits one or more flu like symptoms, Coastal Pediatric Associates is here to help. All of our CPA offices offer extended and weekend hours. Please call your office for an appointment.

- Not alert or interacting when awake
- Seizures
- Fever above 104°F (combined with other symptoms)
- In children less than 12 weeks, any fever
- Fever or cough that improves but then return or worsen
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions

This list is not all inclusive. Please consult our office for any other symptom that is severe or concerning.

Is there a medicine to treat flu?

Yes. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that can be used to treat flu illness. They can shorten the illness and make it milder. Antivirals work best when started during the first 2 days of illness. Antiviral medications are important in the treatment and control of influenza, but they are not a substitute for vaccination.

How long can someone be contagious?

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.

Should my child go to school or day care?

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

When can my child return to school/day care?

- After the fever has been gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines for at least 24 hours (A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C)* or higher)
- The child is able to participate in normal activities



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