

Influenza (the flu) is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses. There are many different strains of the flu virus, and they are constantly changing. These viruses 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 due to flu complications, including pneumonia.

FLU FACTS FOR PARENTS

How can I protect my child against the flu?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 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 of age 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 your child gets plenty of rest and drink enough fluids.
- **Children younger than 5 — and especially those younger than 2 —** and those of any age who have a long-term health condition such as asthma or diabetes are at greater risk for serious complications from the flu. Talk with your doctor.

What if my child seems very sick?

Seek emergency care or take your child to a doctor right away if he/she 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

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.

IMPORTANT!

Teach children to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or to cough into their sleeve, not their hand! Throw tissues in the trash after you use them.



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.



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.



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