

# Seasonal Influenza (Flu) 2013–2014



## What is the flu?

The influenza (flu) virus causes serious illness that may result in hospitalization or death. It mostly affects the breathing system but may also affect the whole body. The flu season usually starts in the fall and ends in the spring. Talk with your doctor about getting vaccinated at the start of the season (late summer/early fall) so that you are protected year-round.

People can get the flu more than once per year and many times in their lives. Influenza viruses are unpredictable. They are always changing over time and from year to year. Three seasonal flu viruses 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. This year's flu vaccine includes 3 strains (trivalent) or 4 strains (quadrivalent).

The trivalent vaccine protects against 1 strain from last year and 2 new strains. These are

- Influenza A (H1N1)
- Influenza A (H3N2)
- Influenza B

The new quadrivalent vaccine protects against the same 3 strains as the trivalent vaccine and adds a different influenza B strain. Although this may offer improved protection, one type of flu vaccine is not preferred over another.

The number of vaccine doses your child needs this year depends on his age at the time the first dose is given and his flu vaccine history.

- Children 6 months through 8 years of age should get 2 doses if they did not get 2 flu vaccines since July 1, 2010, or only 1 dose if they did.
- Children 9 years and older need only 1 dose.

Everyone should get the flu vaccine each year to update their protection because

- Protection from the flu vaccine lasts for about 6 to 12 months.

- The virus strains in the vaccine often change, like they did this year, so your protection usually needs updating.

Vaccination is especially important for

- All children, including infants born preterm, who are 6 months and older with conditions that increase the risk of complications from the flu
- Children of American Indian/Alaska Native heritage
- All household contacts and out-of-home care providers of children with high-risk conditions and children younger than 5 years (especially infants younger than 6 months)
- All health care personnel
- All women who are pregnant, are considering pregnancy, have recently delivered, or are breastfeeding during the flu season

## Who should get which flu vaccine?

There are 2 types of flu vaccine.

**Inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) is given as a shot.** There are 2 kinds of shots. The intramuscular (into the muscle) shot is licensed and recommended for children 6 months and older and adults, including people with and without chronic medical conditions. The intradermal (into the skin) shot is licensed for use only in people 18 through 64 years of age.

**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 of the flu vaccine?

There are very few side effects of the flu vaccine. The area where the IIV flu shot is given may be sore for a day or two. Fever may occur within 24 hours in about 10% to 35% of children younger than 2 years but rarely in older children and adults.

Because LAIV is sprayed into the nose, your child might get a stuffy, runny nose within the first few days. LAIV may produce mild symptoms, including rhinitis, headache, wheezing, vomiting, muscle aches, and fever.

You or your children will not get the flu from the vaccine. It takes 2 weeks for the vaccine to start working, so people can catch the flu before they are protected.

## Is the flu vaccine safe for children with egg allergies?

Yes! There is enough scientific information to show that IIV given in a single, age-appropriate dose is well tolerated by nearly all children and adults who have egg allergy. Check with your doctor if you have any questions.

- Children with a history of mild egg allergy (hives) can get the flu vaccine safely at their doctor's office.
- Children with a history of severe egg allergy should have their doctor consult with their allergist before getting the flu vaccine.

## When should my child get the flu vaccine?

The best time to get the flu vaccine is the late summer/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 through June. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about the 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 their 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 a lot 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 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](http://www.HealthyChildren.org), for the latest news about the flu.

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