

Flu Information for Parents

What is flu?

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu viruses cause illness, hospital stays, and deaths in the United States each year.

How serious is flu?

Flu illness can vary from mild to severe. While flu can be serious even in kids who are healthy, it can be especially dangerous for young children and children of any age who have certain chronic health conditions. Children younger than 5 years old—especially those younger than 2—are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications. Children of any age with certain chronic health conditions like asthma and diabetes are also at higher risk.

What are the signs and symptoms of flu?

Symptoms of the flu can include:

- Fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

* It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.

Protect your child

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

Ask your health care provider which flu vaccine is right for your child.

- Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine by the end of October, if possible.
- Children 6 months through 8 years of age may need 2 doses of vaccine.
- Children younger than 6 months are at higher risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. Parents, siblings, and people who care for infants should be vaccinated in order to help protect younger children you cannot be vaccinated.

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

- Stay away from people who are sick, cover your coughs and sneezes, wash your hands often with soap and water, do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.

If your child is sick

What can I do if my child gets sick?

Talk to your doctor right away 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 at higher risk for flu complications, call your doctor or take them to the doctor right away if they develop flu symptoms.
- If your child becomes sick with flu illness, CDC recommends that they stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone and their symptoms have improved or resolved. (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.

*Many authorities use either 100 (37.8 degrees Celsius) or 100.4 F (38.0 degrees Celsius) as a cut-off for fever, but this number can vary depending on factors such as the method of measurement and the age of the person.

Is there medicine to treat flu?

Yes. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that can be used to treat flu illness. They can shorten your illness and make it milder, and they can prevent serious complications that could result in a hospital stay. Antiviral treatment of the flu works best when given as soon as possible, ideally 1-2 days after flu symptoms develop. Antiviral drugs are recommended to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example, people who are in the hospital) or people who are at higher risk of serious flu complications who get flu symptoms. Antivirals can be given to most children and pregnant people.



For more information, visit
www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm
or call 800-CDC-INFO

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