

# Flu Information for Parents

## What is the 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 the flu?

Flu illness can vary from mild to severe. While the 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 long-term health problems.

## What are the symptoms of the 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 either 1 or 2 doses of vaccine.
- Children younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. Parents, siblings, and people who care for infants should be vaccinated instead.

**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 cough and sneezes, wash your hands often with soap and water, do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth, and clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with flu viruses.

## 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 high 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. (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.

### Is there medicine to treat the flu?

Yes. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that can be used to treat flu illness. They can make people feel better and get better sooner. Antivirals can mean the difference between having milder illness instead of very serious illness that could result in a hospital stay. These drugs can be given to children and pregnant women.



For more information, visit  
[www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children)  
or call 800-CDC-INFO



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