



Feeling Concerned About the Flu? Information for Parents

During highly active flu seasons, it can seem like everyone around is getting sick. You may hear about children being cared for in a hospital, or sadly even passing away, due to the flu. While this can be very scary, there are things to know that can help ease your concerns. Here are some things to know about the flu:

The flu happens every year

Every year, millions of Americans become ill with the flu. The good news is that almost all children will get better on their own at home. Unfortunately, the flu can sometimes lead to severe complications or even death. Children who are at highest risk for complications include those who are less than five years of age, and those who have a chronic disease such as asthma, diabetes, or other ongoing conditions. If you are unsure if your child is at high risk, or if you are concerned that they may be having complications related to the flu, contact your child's doctor right away. The flu is a common illness that doctors have a lot of experience in treating.

The flu vaccine helps

The flu vaccine is not perfect and even if you get the vaccine, there is a chance you will still get the flu. If you do become ill, studies have shown that children who get a flu vaccine are less likely to become severely sick from the flu. You can get your child a flu vaccine at any time during flu season, but the sooner they get the vaccine, the better. Adults should get the vaccine too so that there is less chance of the flu spreading to others.

The flu vaccine is very safe. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) look closely at the safety of vaccines approved for use in the United States. Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received flu vaccines over the past 50 years, and there has been much research to support the safety of flu vaccines. Like any medical product, vaccines can cause side effects. The most common side effects are soreness or redness at the injection site, headaches, and muscle aches. These common side effects tend to be mild and go away on their own within a few days. For more information on flu vaccine safety, please visit the CDC's website <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/general.htm>.

Most cases of the flu can be treated at home

Most cases of the flu do not require medical care. When given early in the illness, antiviral drugs prescribed by your child's doctor may shorten their illness by a day or so and may lessen the chance of complications. These drugs are important for children less than five years of age, for those with chronic health problems, and those who are very sick. For all others, time along with lots of rest and drinking enough fluids are usually enough to treat the flu.

You can help keep your child from getting the flu

Besides the flu vaccine, there are other actions you can take to help prevent the flu.

- **Stay home when you are ill!** If you or your child do become ill with the flu, you should stay home from school or work until your fever is gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing products, like Tylenol. It's also a good idea to avoid large crowds or visiting others who might be more likely to get the flu (younger siblings, grandparents) when you are sick. This can help keep others from getting sick.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Keep sick family members away from others in the home.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue in the trash after it has been used. Teach your children to do the same.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect things that are touched often. Use a household disinfectant according to the directions on the label.

Call your child's doctor

If you are worried about your child's flu symptoms and they seem to be getting worse, call the child's doctor **right away**. Things to be on the lookout for are:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or not making as much urine as they normally do)
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough

- Has other health problems (like heart or lung disease, diabetes, or asthma) and develops flu symptoms, including a fever and/or a cough

For more information, go to the New Jersey Department of Health flu website at <http://nj.gov/health/cd/topics/flu.shtml>. Follow on Twitter @njdeptofhealth, facebook at NJDeptofHealth, Instagram @njdeptofhealth and Snapchat @njdoh.