

FLU FACTS

FOR PARENTS & GUARDIANS



Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory infection of the nose, throat and lungs. The flu is different from a cold and can be very dangerous for children. The Centers for Disease Prevention (CDC) estimate that 6,000 to 26,000 children under the age of five are hospitalized each year from complications related to the flu.

Symptoms start one to four days after the virus enters the body which means that flu germs can spread even before symptoms appear.

How can I protect my child against the flu?

According to the CDC and the New York State Health Department, the first and most important thing you can do is get a flu vaccine for you and your family. The vaccination is recommended for everyone six months of age and older. For more information about the vaccine, talk to your doctor.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

The flu comes on suddenly. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Not all people with the flu will have a fever.

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 drinks 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 or 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

Can my child go to school or day care if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and avoid giving the flu to other children or caregivers.

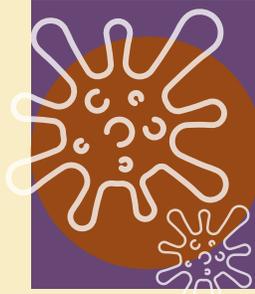
IMPORTANT

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. Encourage them to wash their hands frequently with soap and water (for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).



When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Healthcare professionals recommend children stay home until they're well enough to go back to school. This is typically about 24 hours after symptoms begin to improve. If your child has a fever, a good rule of thumb is to keep them home for at least 24 hours after their fever (a temperature of 100°F or higher) is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.



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.

