



The Flu in Children: What Parents Need to Know

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What is the flu?

- Influenza, also known as flu, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. The flu can infect the nose, throat, and lungs. The virus can spread through droplets that form when someone talks, sneezes, or coughs. The virus can also live on many surfaces: it can spread if you touch it and then touch your mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Flu symptoms can range from mild to severe. Certain children are at higher risk of complications caused by influenza, including those younger than 5 years of age (especially those younger than 2 years of age) and children with long-term health problems.
- Signs and symptoms of the flu include:
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Runny nose
 - Congestion
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Tiredness
 - Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

How can I protect my family and myself from the flu?

- Get vaccinated!
 - The yearly flu vaccine is the number one way to prevent the flu
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend a **yearly** flu vaccine for every child 6 months of age and older
 - Vaccines are generally safe, but they may cause mild side effects such as muscle soreness or fever
 - Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about the flu vaccine
- Prevent the spread!
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
 - Avoid close contact with sick individuals
 - Sneeze and cough into your elbow or into a tissue
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
 - Practice good health habits
 - Stay home when you are sick
 - Disinfect surfaces
 - Stay hydrated and eat healthy foods
 - Be physically active

When should I call my healthcare provider?

- If your child starts to develop any of the following symptoms, it is a medical emergency and your child should be taken to the emergency department:
 - Fast or difficulty breathing
 - Their lips or face turn blue
 - Complaints of chest pain or severe muscle pain or refusal to walk
 - Dehydration (no urine for 8 hours, dry mouth, no tears when crying)
 - Decreased alertness when awake
 - Seizures
 - Fever > 104°F (any fever in children < 12 weeks old)
 - Fever or cough that improve but then return or worsen
 - Worsening of chronic medical conditions
- If your child is younger than 5 years of age or has certain long-term health problems and they develop flu symptoms, go to or call your healthcare provider right away

What is the treatment for flu?

- **The flu is generally mild and does not require prescribed medications. You can do the following to help your child feel better:**
 - Make sure they drink plenty of water
 - Encourage them to rest
 - Use over-the-counter pain relievers for their aches and pains
- **Medications for the flu may be prescribed for some children**
 - In certain situations, your healthcare provider may prescribe medications that treat flu
 - These medications have been shown to shorten sickness, make the sickness milder, and prevent serious complications like pneumonia (lung infection)
 - These medications work best if taken within 2 days of getting sick
 - If your child is prescribed a medication to treat the flu, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about common side effects