

Flu Facts *for parents*

Influenza (the flu) is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses. There are many different strains of influenza virus, and they are constantly changing. They cause illness, hospital stays and deaths in the United States each year. The flu can be very dangerous for children. Each year about 20,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized due to flu complications, such as pneumonia.



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, people might get the flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms of the flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people with the flu will not have a fever.

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

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

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

Keep children home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.

How can I protect my child against the flu?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the first and most important thing you can do is get a flu vaccine for yourself and your child. Talk to your doctor.

- Vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Information regarding influenza and the benefits of influenza immunizations is free, accessible and available in different languages on the New York State Department of Health's website at: http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/childhood_adolescent/.

What can I do if my child gets sick?

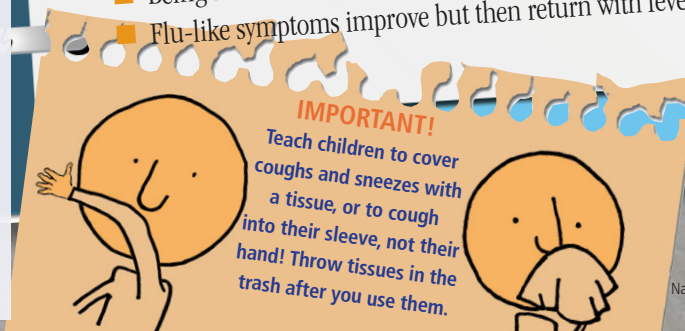
Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

- Children 5 years and older without other health problems: Consult your doctor as needed and make sure they get plenty of rest and drink enough fluids.
- Children younger than 5 years (and especially younger than 2 years) or of any age with a long-term health condition (like asthma or diabetes, for example) are at risk for serious complications from the flu. Talk to your doctor.

What if my child seems very sick?

Call for emergency care or take a child of any age to a doctor right away if he/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



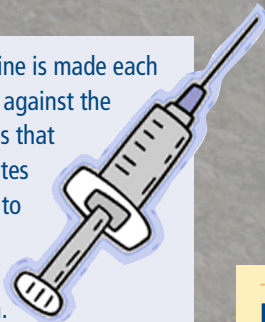
Flu Facts *for teachers*

The flu is contagious! Symptoms start one to four days after the virus enters the body. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Most adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming sick. Children may pass the virus for longer than seven days. Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others.



Washing hands with soap and water (for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice) will help protect against many germs, especially after you cough or sneeze. Proper hand-washing should be promoted before meals, after recess or physical education, and at other appropriate times. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

A new flu vaccine is made each year to protect against the three flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during the next flu season.




Flu vaccines are made using strict safety and production measures, and have been given to millions in the United States with a very good safety record.

What are some of the ways I can protect children in my classroom against the flu?

Take — and encourage your students to take — everyday steps that can help prevent the spread of germs. This includes:

- If you are sick, stay home. Children and teachers should stay home from school for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash hands often and carefully with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- If someone in the classroom is sick, try to keep the sick person separate from others, if possible.
- Keep surfaces such as desk tops, doorknobs, sinks, countertops and toys for children clean by wiping them down with a disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York State Health Department advise that a yearly flu vaccine is always the best way to specifically prevent the flu. School staff and students' families should discuss this option with their family physician. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) would like you to know that information regarding influenza and the benefits of influenza immunizations is free, accessible and available in different languages on the department's website at: http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/childhood_adolescent/.


 Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
 National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD)
 Learn more at www.cdc.gov/flu

Is there a medicine to treat the flu?

Antiviral drugs can treat flu illness. They can make people feel better and get better sooner and may prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia, for example, that can lead to hospitalization and even death. These drugs are different from antibiotics, but they also need to be prescribed by a doctor. They work best when started during the first two days of illness, especially for people who are at greater risk of having serious flu complications. These drugs can be given to children and pregnant women. Talk with your family doctor about appropriate flu medicine for your family.