

Frequent Questions About The Flu

What can a parent do to keep children from catching a flu or cold?

That's difficult because flus and colds are respiratory infections. That means we get them through breathing germs in from the air. So, we can get those at any time. Basically, for a child, I would think a child should get a proper diet, proper rest and try to avoid contact with individuals who have colds, sore throats, flu, etc., but I think the basic concepts are still the same; proper diet, rest, exercise, and stay as healthy as possible. Practice Good Health Habits Certain good health habits can help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses like the flu. Protect yourself and your child by following these steps routinely:

- *Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze—throw the tissue away after you use it.*
- *Wash your hands often with soap and water, and as soon as possible after you cough or sneeze on them. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.*
- *Keep you and your baby away from people who are coughing or sneezing, as much as you can.*
- *Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth since germs can spread this way.*

What is the difference between a cold and the flu?

The flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses but they are caused by different viruses. Because these two types of illnesses have similar flu-like symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough are more common and intense. Colds are usually milder than the flu. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations. Remember How the Flu Spreads The main way that flu spreads is in respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and infect someone nearby. Though much less frequent, the flu may also spread through indirect contact with respiratory droplets.

Follow These Steps:

If you get flu-like symptoms, which can include a fever, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, or body aches follow the precautions below:*

- *Check with your health-care provider. (If you have Influenza, your doctor may prescribe antiviral medications for you.)*
- *If you work in child care, do not go to work if you become sick.*
- *Try to minimize contact with your child as much as possible.*
- *Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, and put your used tissue in a waste basket.*

- Wash your hands often with soap and water and as soon as possible after you sneeze or cough on them. If you are not near water use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Take these precautions for the first 5 days of your illness (beginning the first day you notice symptoms).

**Note: these symptoms alone or with fever often are caused by other factors, such as the common cold, not Influenza virus. Individuals need not minimize contact with children when suffering from the common cold.*

Do you recommend everyone get a flu vaccine?

*It is a very good idea unless you are allergic to eggs and if it is available. We now have some newer methods for protecting yourself against the flu, like inhaling a nasal spray referred to as Flu-Mist which is also available. If we started giving flu shots to everyone, especially those in school, you will begin to see a decreased incidence of the flu. Recent studies have shown that children less than 2 years old — even previously healthy children — are more likely than older children to end up in the hospital with serious complications if they get the flu. These complications can include pneumonia (an illness in which the lungs get infected and inflamed), dehydration (when a child is too sick to drink enough fluids and her body loses too much water), worsening of long-term medical problems like heart disease or asthma, encephalopathy (a disease of the brain), sinus problems, and ear infections. **Because children are at increased risk of getting severe illness from the flu, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that all children 6 months to 23 months old get a flu shot. (Flu shots are not approved for use in children less than 6 months old.)** Also, household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children less than 2 years old should get vaccinated against the flu. This is particularly important for contacts of children less than 6 months of age, because children less than 6 months old cannot be vaccinated themselves and cannot be given antiviral medications to treat the flu. October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but you can still get vaccinated in December and later. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May. The ability of flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine, and the similarity or "match" between the virus strains in the vaccine and those in circulation. Testing has shown that both vaccines are effective at preventing the flu.*

Possible Vaccine Side Effects: Different side effects can be associated with the flu shot and the live attenuated (weakened) Influenza vaccine (LAIV). The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that could occur are: soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given; low-grade fever, and aches. If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last one to two days. Possible side effects with LAIV include cold-like symptoms, such as headache, cough, sore throat, tiredness/weakness, irritability, and muscle aches. Almost all people who get Influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. However, a vaccine may rarely cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions.

***There are some people who should not be vaccinated with LAIV. These include:*

- *-People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs*
- *-People who have had a severe reaction to an Influenza vaccination in the past*
- *-People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome within 6 weeks of getting an Influenza vaccine previously*
- *-Children less than 6 months of age*

Where can I get more information about the Flu?

For more information and updates about the flu, call the CDC's hotline or visit CDC's Web site.

- *You can call the **CDC Flu Information Hotline** (English and Spanish) at:*
- *800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)*
888-232-6348 (TTY)
- *You can visit CDC's flu Web site where you can access the following:*
- *Information about preventing the spread of flu in schools;*
- *"Be a Germ Stopper" and "Cover Your Cough" posters formatted for printing;*
- *"It's a SNAP" toolkit (leaves CDC's website), which includes activities that school administrators, teachers; and students and others can do to help stop the spread of germs in schools.*
- *Also, CDC has developed a flu Web site where you can access:*
- *Information about preventing the spread of flu in schools;*
- *"Be a Germ Stopper" and "Cover Your Cough" posters formatted for printing;*
- *"It's a SNAP" toolkit, which includes activities that school administrators, teachers; and students and others can do to help stop the spread of germs in schools.*