

# Understand The Facts About Influenza

## Help Protect Yourself and Your Family From The Flu

Every year, healthy children and adults get sick from the flu and have to go to the doctor or the hospital. Here is some important information about influenza, also called “the flu,” to help parents like yourself protect your family from this serious respiratory illness.

### Did You Know?

- The flu is a potentially serious contagious disease that can cause illness, hospitalization, and sometimes death.
- Children 2 to 17 years old are nearly 2 to 3 times more likely to be infected with the flu than adults.<sup>1</sup>
- School-age children are the main spreaders of the flu virus to other children, adults, and older people.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 200,000 people in the United States are hospitalized each year because of the flu.<sup>3</sup>
- Children younger than 5 years old had similar hospitalization rates from the flu as people 50–64 years of age.<sup>3</sup>
- The flu is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses.

1 Glezen WP, Taber LH, Frank AL, Gruber WC, Piedra PA. Influenza virus infection in infants. *Pediatr Infect Dis J*. 1997;16:1065-1068.

2 Glezen WP, Couch RB. Interpandemic influenza in the Houston area, 1974–76. *N Engl J Med* 1978;298:587-592.

3 CDC. Seasonal Influenza (Flu) – Q & A: Seasonal Influenza-Associated Hospitalizations in the United States. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/hospital.htm>. Accessed on November 26, 2012.



Helping Families



Understand & Protect Against Influenza



## Symptoms of the flu:<sup>5</sup>

The flu usually comes on quickly; people with the flu can have some, or all, of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or Stuffy Nose
- Body Aches
- Headache
- Fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

***If someone in your family is experiencing symptoms that you think might be the flu, call your healthcare provider.***

## The flu is not a cold.<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes the flu is confused with a cold, because they have similar symptoms. But, in general, the flu is worse than the common cold.

These symptoms are more common and intense with the flu:

- Fever
- Body aches
- Tiredness
- Dry cough

## How does the flu spread?<sup>5</sup>

When people with the flu cough, sneeze, or talk, the virus spreads, mainly by droplets from the nose and mouth that land on or are inhaled by anyone nearby. You can also get the flu if you touch a surface with the flu virus on it, like a door or railing, and then touch your nose, mouth, or eyes.

## The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated.<sup>5</sup>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine every year.

To protect yourself and your children against the flu, make sure that everyone in the family gets their flu vaccine.

## Who should get vaccinated?<sup>5</sup>

Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine each season. But, some people are at higher risk for serious complications from the flu:

- Children younger than 5, especially children younger than 2 (but older than 6 months)
- Older people, adults 65 and older
- Pregnant women
- People with long-term health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease

## Other ways to help protect your family against the flu.<sup>6</sup>

Yearly vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu. But, the CDC offers these everyday tips to stop the spread of germs:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze and then throw the tissue away after you use it.
- Stay away from sick people and try to keep anyone in your house who is sick in a separate room, if you can.
- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Wipe down surfaces in the bathroom and kitchen and wash your children's toys with a household disinfectant.<sup>7</sup>

4 CDC. Seasonal Influenza (Flu) – Q & A: Cold Versus Flu. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/coldflu.htm>. Accessed on November 26, 2012.

5 CDC. Seasonal Influenza (Flu) – Key Facts About Influenza (Flu) & Flu Vaccine. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>. Accessed on November 26, 2012.

6 CDC. Seasonal Influenza (Flu) – CDC Says Take 3 Actions To Fight The Flu. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm>. Accessed on November 26, 2012.


7 CDC. Seasonal Influenza (Flu) – How To Clean and Disinfect Schools To Help Slow the Spread of Flu. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm>. Accessed on December 6, 2012.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE FLU, VISIT [WWW.CDC.GOV/FLU/](http://WWW.CDC.GOV/FLU/)**

**This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult with a healthcare professional if you have any questions about your health or the health of your child.**

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