

FACTS ABOUT FLU



What Is The Flu?

There are many strains of influenza viruses that can cause the flu. The flu can be relatively mild or it may result in serious and even life-threatening complications. The virus attacks the respiratory system, which includes the nose, throat, bronchial tubes, and lungs.

WHO SHOULD GET THE FLU VACCINE?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend the flu vaccine be given to all children ages 6 months to 5 years and to children older than 5 years with health problems such as asthma, sickle cell disease, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, other lung problems, and heart or kidney disease.

WHEN SHOULD CHILDREN GET THE FLU VACCINE?

Every year the flu vaccine is made specifically for the types of flu predicted for that year. The vaccine works best when it has two weeks to build immunity. To be ready for flu season, children should get a flu shot by Thanksgiving.



Symptoms

Fever
Headache
General Aches, Pains
Fatigue, Weakness
Extreme Exhaustion
Stuffy Nose
Sneezing
Sore Throat
Chest Discomfort, Cough

Cold

Rare
Rare
Slight
Quite mild
Never
Common
Usual
Common
Mild to moderate; hacking cough

Flu

High (102-104 degrees F); lasts 3-4 days
Prominent
Usual; often severe
Can last up to 2-3 weeks
Early and prominent
Sometimes
Sometimes
Sometimes
Common; can become severe

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU?

The chart at the left, from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, will help you determine whether your child has a cold or the flu.

HOW IS THE FLU TREATED?

Because the flu is a virus, it cannot be treated with antibiotics. To help alleviate your child's pain and fever, you can give them acetaminophen, like Tylenol®. Do not give your child aspirin unless specifically directed by your pediatrician. Parents also can help make their child more comfortable during the flu. It is important that your child drinks plenty of fluids because a high fever, like with the flu, can dehydrate your child. Make sure your child is getting plenty of rest and is not too active. Good restful activities include reading books, coloring and watching movies.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE PEDIATRICIAN'S OFFICE?

Time is the best cure for both the common cold and flu. Over-the-counter medications will help ease some of the symptoms and make your child more comfortable, but you still have to wait for the virus to run its course. For mild flu illness, going to a busy emergency room is not encouraged. Home treatment is recommended. Call your pediatrician's office if your child develops flu-like symptoms and is considered at high risk for complications of the flu, such as very young children or children with other health problems. Children who appear seriously ill should be seen promptly by their pediatrician or at an emergency room. Children with fevers higher than 104 degrees, or those having trouble eating or drinking or difficulty breathing, are considered to be seriously ill.



HOW CAN FAMILIES PREVENT THE FLU?

- Everyone should wash their hands frequently.
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Parents or caregivers should check with a doctor to see if the flu vaccine is available for them.



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