

FLU SEASON ADVISORY: SPECIAL ADVICE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH CHRONIC DISEASES

It is especially important to protect children with chronic diseases from the flu, as they are at increased risk for complications and serious illness. If your child suffers from asthma, diabetes, heart disease, anemia, lung/kidney disease or AIDS/HIV, getting the flu can be very serious. Following is information on flu prevention and treatment to help protect your child. If you have additional questions, call your school nurse.



TAKE YOUR CHILD TO GET A FLU SHOT

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a flu shot is the first line of defense in preventing the flu. The flu vaccine is highly recommended by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for children with high-risk conditions, including:
 - Children who have chronic disorders of the pulmonary or cardiovascular systems, including asthma.
 - Children who have underlying medical conditions that require hospitalization or regular doctor visits due to chronic disease including heart, lung or kidney disease, diabetes, asthma, anemia or immunosuppression (caused by medications or HIV infection).
 - Children and teenagers (ages six months to 18 years) who must take aspirin regularly and might be at risk for developing Reye syndrome if they get the flu.
- Parents and other family members in close contact with a child who suffers from a chronic condition should also get vaccinated.
- While October or November are the best times for a child with chronic conditions to get the flu shot, it's never too late in the flu season to get vaccinated.

- The flu shot becomes effective about two weeks after vaccination.
- The American Lung Association (ALA), in Partnership with Maxim Health Systems, has developed an electronic influenza vaccine clinic locator. Go to www.flucliniclocator.org, enter a zip code and receive information about clinics scheduled in your area.

KNOW WHEN TO SEE THE DOCTOR

- If your child has symptoms of the flu such as high fever, severe headache, muscle and body aches, exhaustion or dry cough, **you need to see a doctor immediately.**
- A doctor can prescribe antiviral medication to help lessen duration of the virus and reduce the risk of complications, such as pneumonia.
 - To be effective, antiviral medication should be taken within 12-48 hours after flu symptoms begin.
- Additionally, antiviral medication can also be prescribed for flu prevention, particularly with high risk groups, such as children with chronic conditions.
 - Studies show that some antiviral medications are up to 89 percent effective in preventing the flu if taken within 12-48 hours of exposure to the virus.
- If flu symptoms don't improve or get worse after three to four days, **call the doctor immediately.**
- Also call your doctor if your child is feeling better and then suddenly develops signs of a more serious problem, such as a stomach ache, vomiting, high fever, shaking chills, chest pain or coughing with thick, yellow-green mucus.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE INFLUENZA VIRUS, VISIT WWW.CDC.GOV/FLU



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