

Influenza (Flu) Information for Parents

What is influenza (flu)?

The flu is a respiratory disease caused by a virus that attacks the nose, throat, and lungs. It can be mild, but is sometimes severe and at times can lead to death. It is not the same as the “stomach flu.”

What are the symptoms?

Flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, headache, extreme tiredness, and body aches. These symptoms come on quickly and can be bad enough to keep you in bed for several days.

Should my child get a flu vaccination?

Yes. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get flu vaccine every year. Getting a flu vaccine (the shot or nasal spray) helps protect your child from getting the flu and helps prevent them from passing it to people who can get very sick from flu – like babies, elderly people, and people who have chronic diseases.

Are children at high risk for complications of flu?

Sometimes healthy people, including children, can have serious complications or die from the flu. Children at risk for serious complications include:

- Children age 6 months to 5 years, but especially those under 2 years
- Children and teens 5-18 years with:
 - Heart disease
 - Asthma or other Pulmonary disease
 - Metabolic disease (including diabetes)

- Immune deficiency
- Blood disorders
- Long-term aspirin therapy
- Teens who are pregnant during flu season

Should my child get one or two doses of flu vaccine?

It depends on your child’s age and whether they got flu vaccine this past year. If your child is 6 months through 8 years old, he or she may need two doses at least four weeks apart. Ask your doctor or clinic.

When should my family get vaccinated?

For best protection, flu vaccine is usually given in early fall before flu season starts. But you can get it anytime during flu season which is typically October through April.

How is flu different from a cold?

Colds are generally less serious than the flu. With a cold, you may have a runny or stuffy nose, while the flu causes body aches, fever, and extreme fatigue. A cold won’t usually keep kids from their normal activities, but kids with the flu will often feel too sick to play. Unlike colds, flu can cause serious health problems like pneumonia, bacterial infections, and hospitalization.

What type of flu vaccine should my child get?

There are several types of flu vaccine available. Your health care provider will know what type

INFLUENZA (FLU) INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

of vaccine is best for your child. The most important thing is to get them vaccinated. Don't wait for a specific type of flu vaccine to be available.

- **Nasal spray vaccine** – This vaccine is available for healthy, non-pregnant people age 2 to 50 years, so most children and teens can get it. If your provider does not have the nasal spray, your children should get the flu shot.
- **Quadrivalent vaccine** - This vaccine protects against four strains (or types) of flu: two A strains and two B strains. It is available in the nasal spray or a shot. While this vaccine is designed to protect against more flu strains, its effectiveness will depend on the strains that are circulating during the flu season.

Can my child be vaccinated if they are allergic to eggs?

In most cases, a child with an egg allergy can be safely vaccinated. Children who experience only hives after eating eggs may be vaccinated with the flu shot. After vaccination, you will be asked to stay to be watched for 30 minutes.

A child who experiences more severe symptoms after eating eggs should be vaccinated by a provider with experience managing allergic reactions. If your child has other allergies that could be related to an egg allergy but has never consumed eggs, tell your provider. Children with an egg allergy should not receive the nasal spray vaccine.

What if my child has the flu?

- Stay home if you or your child is sick.
 - Rest and drink lots of fluids.
 - Children may need fever reducing medications to keep their fever under control. Follow your doctor's instructions.
 - Antibiotics will not help a person recover from the flu. Flu is caused by a virus not by bacteria.
- Take your child to the doctor or the emergency room if he or she:
 - Breathes rapidly or with difficulty
 - Has bluish skin color
 - Does not drink enough and becomes dehydrated
 - Does not wake up or interact with others
 - Is so irritable that he or she doesn't want to be held
 - Gets better only to become sick again, with fever and a more severe cough
 - If you are concerned that something does not seem right with your child, call your doctor or clinic.

What can I do to protect myself and others?

- Get vaccinated.
- Avoid being around others who are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Protect infants by not exposing them to large crowds or sick family members when flu is in your community.
- Do not share drinking cups and straws.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (door knobs, refrigerator handles, phones, water faucets).

What about antiviral medicines?

Antiviral medicines can offer some protection if you have been exposed to flu, but these medications are only recommended for certain groups of people. If you have questions about antivirals, talk to your health care provider.

Minnesota Department of Health
Immunization Program
PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5503 or 1-800-657-3970
www.mdhflu.com

LOCAL

With a spike in case, flu is now 'widespread' in Minnesota

FEBRUARY 25, 2016 — 9:35PM

The flu is now officially widespread in Minnesota.

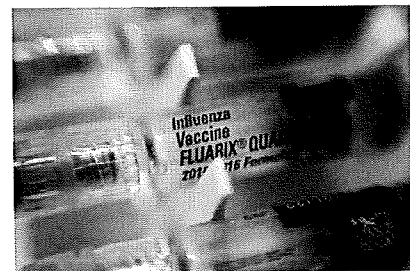
The state's weekly influenza update, issued Thursday, showed a spike in specimens testing positive for flu and flulike illnesses at hospitals and clinics. After a quiet start to this year's season, the virus is now prevalent across most of the state.

Flu earns the "widespread" designation when half or more of the state's reporting districts report outbreaks. Flu becomes widespread almost every season.

Despite the jump in cases, which have doubled since last week, health officials say this year's season is not unusual compared with previous years when the virus peaked in late winter.

"We are starting to see peak activity," said Karen Martin, an epidemiologist at the Minnesota Department of Health, adding that this year's flu season has still been mild compared with previous years. The number of cases reported in schools and nursing homes remains low, Martin said.

Youssef Rddad



(http://stmedia.startribune.com/images/1456444562_10080001+
PATRICK SISON, ASSOCIATED PRESS

FILE - This Thursday, Nov. 12, 2015 file photo shows single dosage syringes of the Fluorix quadrivalent influenza virus vaccine in New...



Influenza (Flu) in Schools

What can schools do to prevent spread of flu?

- Help promote flu vaccination for all students, staff, and families throughout flu season.
- Be aware of flu symptoms: Fever, headache, fatigue, cough, sore throat, and body aches.
- Promote hand hygiene, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve, and staying home when sick for both students and staff.
- Give students and staff tissues to cover coughs and sneezes as well as liquid soap, paper towels, and time to wash their hands.
- Routinely clean and disinfect commonly used areas and frequently touched surfaces. Flu can remain on surfaces for up to 8 hours.
- Follow package instructions when cleaning for contact time and dilution.

Do schools need to provide antibacterial soap?

No. There is no need to use special antibacterial soap; regular soap is effective. Antibacterial products have not been proven to prevent the spread of infection better than regular soap.

Should students with influenza-like illness (ILI) be excluded from school?

- Yes, students and staff with ILI should stay home from school and school activities.
 - ILI is defined as a fever (at least 100°F) and a cough or sore throat.
- Students and staff who become ill during the day should be immediately isolated from others and sent home.
- Students and staff can return to school 24 hours after their fever is gone without fever-reducing medication, (e.g., Tylenol or Advil). They should also be well enough to participate in school before returning.

Should schools close due to flu?

We do not recommend closing schools to prevent flu transmission. However, schools may choose to close or dismiss students if a large number of absences prevent normal school functioning.

When should schools report influenza-like illness (ILI)?

All K-12 schools should report to the Minnesota Department of Health throughout the school year when they reach these thresholds:

- **For all schools, including elementary:** Report when 5 percent or more of the total school enrollment is absent with ILI, or
- **For elementary schools only:** Report if three students from one classroom are sent home or absent with ILI on a given day.

Schools do not need to report subsequent days of the same outbreak. An outbreak is considered over when ILI activity goes below the threshold for at least three weeks. Report a new outbreak if you reach the threshold again after a minimum of three weeks. Individual cases of lab-confirmed flu do not need to be reported.

Reporting instructions and forms can be found at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/school/schoolsurv.html.

Where can schools get current information on flu?

Go to www.mdhflu.com and click on “For Schools” in the left sidebar to get flu-related guidance, reporting forms, templates, and more. Subscribe to receive email updates when the site has been updated. Look for the red envelope at the top of the page and click “subscribe.”

For more information, contact:
Minnesota Department of Health
Vaccine-Preventable Disease Section
www.health.state.mn.us/immunize
651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414