

# The Emily Lastinger Story

*Emily was a little kid who got the flu.*

On Wednesday, January 28, 2004 three-year-old Emily Lastinger took a long nap and began to show signs that she was getting sick. Strep throat was going around in her preschool; her parents kept her home and took her to see her doctor to make sure she was ok. After running some tests the doctor determined she had the flu.

The doctor gave Emily anti-viral medication to lessen the severity of the illness. Her parents were told to give her plenty of fluids and keep an eye on her fever.

On that Friday, and over the weekend, Emily got sicker. Her fever spiked, she began to vomit, kept on vomiting, and she had trouble holding down fluids.

On Monday morning, February 2, Emily's parents made a doctor's appointment for later that day. When they called they were told to give Emily fluids every 15 minutes until she got to the doctor's office.



Emily had a bath, got dressed—she was ready to go to the doctor. While she waited, she laid down on her parents' bed to rest and watch television. Fifteen minutes later, she was lifeless. As soon as her parents found her they began CPR.

Forty-five minutes later in the emergency room the doctors were able to get her heart started. They sent her to the local children's trauma center for more treatment. For twelve hours, the doctors at the center tried to fully

revive her, but the damage to her little body was too great. Emily died that evening.

The autopsy showed Emily died from the flu and complications of the flu.

In addition to influenza, Emily had pneumonia and empyema, a collection of pus in the space between the lungs and the tissue around them—a painful complication.

Emily was not vaccinated against the flu.

## *Influenza can be prevented.*

Each year, more than 20,000 children less than five years old are put in the hospital because of the flu. Children less than two are more likely to be put in the hospital. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that healthy children ages 6 months up to five years, their close contacts, and out-of-home caregivers be vaccinated against the flu.

Children under 6 months old can also get very sick from the flu, but they are too young to get the flu vaccine. The best way to protect them is to make sure people who live with them and take care of them are vaccinated.

The best time to get vaccinated is October or November. Getting vaccinated in December or even later is still helpful since most flu activity generally happens in January or later. For more information, talk to your doctor or primary healthcare provider about getting the flu vaccine.

## **Influenza (The Flu) Fact Sheet for Child-Care Settings.**

### *What is the flu?*

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. The virus attacks the nose, throat, and lungs. It is not the "stomach flu." The flu can be prevented by vaccination.

### *What are the symptoms of the flu?*

Symptoms of the flu include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Children can have additional symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

### *How is the flu spread?*

The flu is spread when an infected person who has the flu coughs or sneezes and sends the flu virus into the air. The virus enters the

nose, throat, or lungs of a person and multiplies. Flu also spreads (though less likely) when a person touches the surface of an object that has flu viruses on it. The virus then enters the body when the person rubs his or her nose.



### *Is the flu dangerous?*

Children less than 2 years old—even healthy children—are at high risk of ending up in the hospital if they get the flu. Vaccinating young children, their families, and other caregivers can help protect them from getting sick. Children may get sinus problems and ear infections as complications from the flu.

### *Can the flu be prevented?*

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination each year. October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but getting vaccinated in December or even later can still be beneficial, because influenza activity typically occurs in January or later.

Other measures include:

- ✓ Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- ✓ Stay home from work or school when you are sick
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, thus reducing the spreading of germs

### *Who should get vaccinated?*

Influenza vaccine is recommended and is especially important for the following:

- ✓ all children aged 6 months through 18 years
- ✓ people who care for children 0-5 years of age
- ✓ all persons, including school-aged children, who want to reduce the risk of becoming sick with flu or transmitting the flu to others
- ✓ people of any age who have medical conditions that place them at increased risk for serious influenza-related complications.



*Should all children be vaccinated?*

The flu vaccine is not approved for use in children less than 6 months old. Children under 6 months old can also get very sick from the flu, but they are too young to get a flu vaccine. The best way to protect young children is to make sure that their household members and their caregivers are vaccinated.

*Is the flu vaccine safe?*

The risk of the flu vaccine causing serious harm, or death is extremely small. However, like any medicine, a vaccine may rarely cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. Almost all people who get influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it.

*What are the side effects that could occur?*

- ✓ Soreness, redness, or swelling where the vaccine was administered
- ✓ Low-grade fever

*What should you do if you get the flu?*

If you have the flu (or a temperature of 100°F or higher):

- ✓ Stay home
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids
- ✓ Cover your mouth when coughing and sneezing
- ✓ Wash your hands frequently

If symptoms get worse seek medical attention.

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Parents should contact their health care provider immediately if they have any concerns about their child's recovery. This would include a child having problems breathing, being too sleepy, or not taking enough fluids.

DO NOT give aspirin to children for treatment of flu symptoms because of the risk of Reye syndrome, an acute and potentially life-threatening condition that results when children take aspirin or aspirin-containing products during certain viral illnesses.

*Where can you get more information?*

Call your doctor, nurse, local health department, or the Texas Department of State Health Services, Immunization Branch at (800) 252-9152.



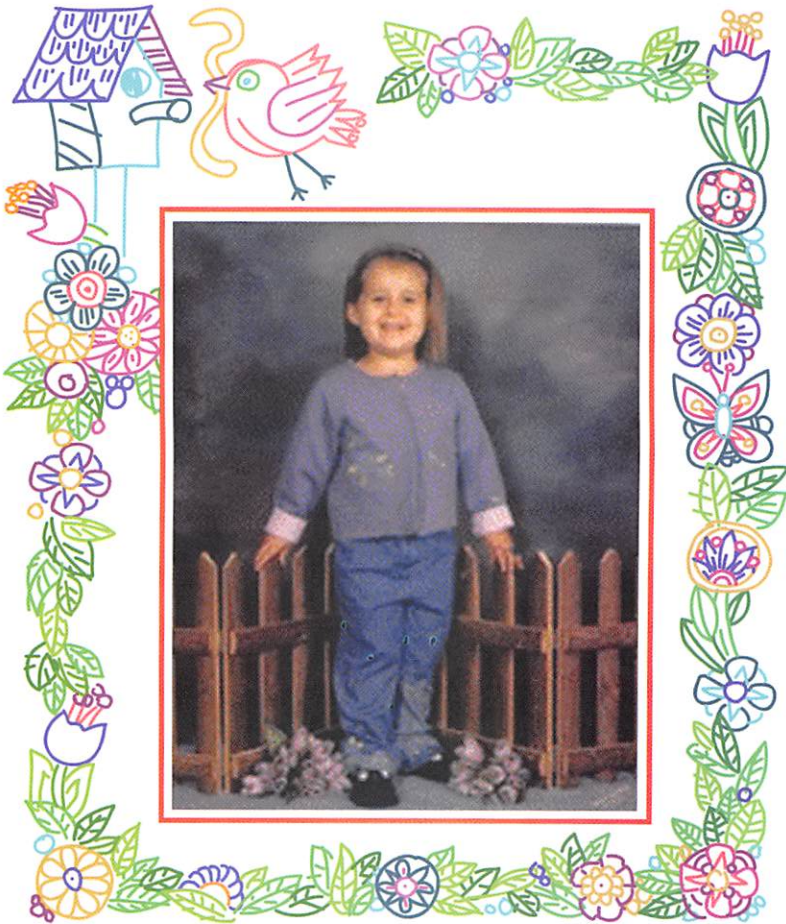
Mailing Address:  
Texas Department of State Health Services  
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VACCINES



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# Little Kids Get the Flu Too!!



Emily Lastinger  
2001-2004  
WCS