Keep your kids safe. Get their seasonal flu vaccines every year.

Seasonal Flu: A Guide for Parents

Is seasonal flu more serious for kids?

Infants and young children are at a greater risk for getting seriously ill from the flu. That's why the New York State Department of Health recommends that all children 6 months and older get the seasonal flu vaccine.

Flu vaccine may save your child's life.

Most people with seasonal flu are sick for about a week, and then they feel better. But, some people, especially young children, pregnant women, older people, and people with chronic health problems can get very sick. Some can even die.
A flu vaccine is the best way to protect your child from seasonal flu. It is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.

What is seasonal flu?

The flu, or influenza, is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu can spread from person to person.

Flu shot or nasal-spray vaccine?

- Flu shots can be given to children 6 months and older.
- A nasal-spray vaccine can be given to healthy children 2 years and older.
- Children younger than 5 years who have experienced wheezing in the past year – or any child with chronic health problems – should get the flu shot, not the nasal-spray vaccine.
- Children younger than 9 years old who get a vaccine for the first time need two doses.

How else can I protect my child?

- Get the seasonal flu vaccine for yourself.
- Encourage your child's close contacts to get seasonal flu vaccine, too. This is very important if your child is younger than 5 or if he or she has a chronic health problem such as asthma (breathing disease) or diabetes (high blood sugar levels). Because children under 6 months can't be vaccinated, they rely on those around them to get vaccinated.
- Wash your hands often and cover your coughs and sneezes. It's best to use a tissue and quickly throw it away. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands. This will prevent the spread of germs.
- Tell your children to:
  - Stay away from people who are sick;
  - Clean their hands often;
  - Keep their hands away from their face, and
  - Cover coughs and sneezes to protect others.

What are signs of the flu?

The flu comes on suddenly. Most people with the flu feel very tired and have a high fever, headache, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and sore muscles. Some people, especially children, may also have stomach problems and diarrhea. The cough can last two or more weeks.

How does the flu spread?	People who have the flu usually cough, sneeze, and have a runny nose. The droplets in a cough, sneeze or runny nose contain the flu virus. Other people can get the flu by breathing in these droplets or by getting them in their nose or mouth.
How long can a sick person spread the flu to others?	Most healthy adults may be able to spread the flu from one day before getting sick to up to 5 days after getting sick. This can be longer in children and in people who don't fight disease as well (people with weaker immune systems).
What should I use to clean hands?	Wash your children's hands with soap and water. Wash them for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice. If soap and water are not handy, use wipes or gels with alcohol in them unless they are visibly soiled. The gels should be rubbed into hands until the hands are dry.
What can I do if my child gets sick?	Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks lots of fluids. Talk with your child's doctor before giving your child over-the-counter medicine. If your children or teenagers may have the flu, never give them aspirin or medicine that has aspirin in it. It could cause serious problems.
Can my child go to school/day care with the flu?	No. If your child has the flu, he or she should stay home to rest. This helps avoid giving the flu to other children.
When can my child go back to school/ day care after having the flu?	Children with the flu should be isolated in the home, away from other people. They should also stay home until they are symptom-free for 24 hours (that is, until they have no fever without the use of fever-control medicines and they feel well for 24 hours.) Remind your child to protect others by covering his or her mouth when coughing or sneezing. You may want to send your child to school with some tissues, wipes or gels with alcohol in them if the school allows gels.

For more information about the flu, visit
http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/

Or, www.cdc.gov/flu
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

NEW YORK
state department of
HEALTH

Follow us on:
Facebook/NYSDOH
Twitter/HealthNYgov