



## Preventing the Flu in 2008-2009

### Strategies and Resources for Child Care Providers and Out-of-Home Caregivers of Children

Influenza, known more commonly as "the flu," is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, and lungs). Unlike the common cold, the flu can cause severe illness and life threatening complications in many people. In an average year, the flu causes 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations. Because the flu virus changes from year to year, annual vaccination against the flu is recommended. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May. The period of illness usually peaks between late December and March. Additional information on influenza and influenza vaccine is available at [www.cispimmunize.org](http://www.cispimmunize.org); [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu); and [www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/](http://www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/).

Studies have shown that children younger than 2 years old — even healthy children — are more likely than older children to end up in the hospital if they get the flu. Complications from the flu can include pneumonia (an illness in which the lungs get infected and inflamed), dehydration (when a child is too sick to drink enough fluids and her body loses too much water), worsening of medical problems like heart disease or asthma, encephalopathy (a disease of the brain), sinus problems, and ear infections. In rare cases, complications from the flu can lead to death. Young children in group settings are particularly important to the spread of influenza because they have high hand-to-mouth activity, play and eat close together, and easily pass germs to each other, to caregivers, to family members, or to others in the community.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children should get influenza vaccine. This includes both healthy and those with high risk conditions, 6 months through 18 years old. (Influenza vaccine is not approved for use in children younger than 6 months old.) Also, all adults who have contact with children younger than 5 years old should get vaccinated. This includes women who are pregnant, household contacts, and out-of-home caregivers. Vaccine for contacts of children younger than 6 months of age is especially important because children less than 6 months old cannot receive the vaccine. We need to surround these unimmunized infants with immunized children and adults. Children receiving the flu vaccine for the first time between the ages of 6 months and 8 years need 2 doses, 4 weeks apart. Children who received only 1 dose in their first year of vaccination, need 2 doses the second year they receive influenza vaccine.

#### **This Year's Influenza Vaccine Supply**

More than 140 million doses of the flu vaccine are expected to be available during the 2008-2009 flu season. There is plenty of vaccine available but distribution delays or local supply shortages may occur. Visit [www.cdc.gov/flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/) for more detailed information.

The AAP encourages parents to contact their pediatrician's office in early October to see when and how they can have their children receive influenza vaccine. Do not delay in getting the vaccine as soon as it is available. If a delay cannot be avoided, remember that children still benefit from receiving the vaccine in December, January and beyond.

## Advice for Early Education Teachers/Child Care Providers and Out-of-Home Caregivers

### Get Influenza Vaccine

If you live with or care for a child younger than 5 years old, the CDC recommends that you receive an influenza vaccination. Whether or not you had flu in the past, you need to get this year's influenza vaccine to protect yourself and others in your care. There are 2 types of flu vaccines:

- The "flu shot" — an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) given with a needle — is approved for use in people 6 months or older, including healthy people and those with chronic medical conditions.
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine —made with live, weakened flu virus — is approved for use in healthy people, 2-49 years of age, who are not pregnant.

The time between exposure to the virus and when you start to feel sick is about 1-3 days. You can spread the flu before you feel sick - from the day before symptoms appear until 7 days after the onset of the flu.

Possible Vaccine Side Effects: Different side effects can be associated with the flu shot and the nasal spray. Some minor side effects that could occur are: soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given, low-grade fever, and aches. If these problems occur, they typically begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so **you cannot get the flu from a flu shot**. Possible side effects with the nasal spray include mild cold-like symptoms, such as headache, cough, sore throat, tiredness/weakness, irritability, and muscle aches. Very rarely, a vaccine may cause serious problems, such as a severe allergic reaction.

People should NOT receive the flu shot or nasal-spray if they:

- Are less than 6 months of age
- Have moderate to severe febrile illness
- Have a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome or hypersensitivity, including anaphylaxis, to eggs, to any previous influenza vaccine dose, or to any of its components.

Additionally, people should NOT receive the nasal-spray if they:

- Are less than 2 or older than 49 years of age
- Have asthma, reactive airway disease, or other chronic disorders of the lungs or cardiovascular systems
- Have underlying medical conditions, including metabolic diseases, such as diabetes, renal dysfunction, and hemoglobinopathies
- Have received other live vaccines within the last 4 weeks
- Have known or suspected immunodeficiency disease, or are receiving immunosuppressive therapies
- Take aspirin

### Practice Good Health Habits

Good health habits can help prevent the spread of the flu, colds, and other viruses. Protect yourself, your co-workers, your family, and the children in your care by following these steps:

- Cover your cough. If possible, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough/sneeze — throw the used tissue away. If you can't cover the cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose by sneezing or coughing into your upper arm.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, and as soon as possible after you cough/sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep yourself and any babies or children in your care away from people who are coughing or sneezing, as much as you can.
- Get into the habit of not touching your eyes, nose, or mouth since germs can spread this way.

## Advice for Teachers and Caregivers Who Get Influenza

If you live with or care for a child younger than 5 years old, follow the precautions below to help prevent the spread of illness.

### Remember How Influenza Spreads

The main way that the flu spreads is in respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and infect someone nearby. Though much less frequent, the flu may also spread through indirect contact with contaminated hands and articles soiled with nose and throat secretions.

### Follow These Steps

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure - get your influenza vaccine!

If you get flu-like symptoms, which can include a fever, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, or body aches\* follow the precautions below:

- Check with your health care provider. (If you have the flu, your doctor may prescribe antiviral medications for you, especially in the first 24-48 hours of symptoms of disease.)
- If you work in an early education/child care program, do not go to work if you are sick.
- Try to minimize contact with children as much as possible.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your upper arm when you cough/sneeze — throw any used tissue away.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water and as soon as possible after you cough/sneeze. If you are not near water use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Take these precautions for the first 5 days of illness (beginning the first day you notice symptoms).

\*Note: these symptoms alone or with fever may be caused by other types of infections, such as the common cold, not the influenza virus. Although it is possible to be infected with the influenza virus and not feel very sick, usually people with influenza feel very ill. You can continue to be in contact with children if you feel well and have a common cold.

### Important Information About Children with Influenza

Excluding children from child care or other group settings is not necessary unless:

- The child is unable to participate in planned activities and staff determines they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group.
- The child meets other exclusion criteria, such as fever with behavior changes.

Children can return to child care when exclusion criteria are resolved (i.e., the child is able to participate, and staff determine they can care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group). For a one page Quick Reference Sheet to copy for parents and staff, see the AAP manual, *Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide*.

### \*\*SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: SMOKING AND INFLUENZA\*\*

Some studies show that people who smoke are more likely to get the flu, and there is a higher mortality rate from the flu among smokers than among nonsmokers. If you smoke or spend time with someone who smokes - get vaccinated. Secondhand smoke is a known cause of respiratory problems, ear infections, asthma attacks, and even sudden infant death syndrome in infants and children. While many smokers open a window while in a car or smoke in another room at home, there is absolutely **NO** safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Bottom Line: Get immunized and don't smoke around children!

# Influenza Resources for Child Care Providers and Out-of-Home Caregivers

## Influenza Guidance

For the recommended childhood immunization schedule and information on the flu vaccine, go to <http://www.aap.org/> and <http://www.cispimmunize.org>. See <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/> for a variety of relevant resources.

## Patient Screening Form – Do I Need Any Vaccinations Today?

Adults need shots, too! It is important that adults at highest risk of serious illness or death from the flu, those in close contact with children, or others in high-risk populations get a flu shot. Review this form to determine if you should get a flu shot: [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4036.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4036.pdf)

## Child Care Materials

Child care providers can take steps to prevent the spread of infectious diseases like the flu. The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (NRC) offers the latest resources in child care to out-of-home child care providers and parents. Available at: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/>

The site also offers an online version of *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, 2nd Edition*, which provides specific guidelines and recommendations regarding promoting immunization and preventing the spread of disease. Available at: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC/index.html>

*Healthy Kids, Healthy Care*: This Web site is a parent-friendly tool on health and safety issues in child care, created by the NRC based on *Caring for Our Children*. Website: [www.healthykids.us/](http://www.healthykids.us/). A print version is also available from the National Resource Center and the AAP.

*Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide*, presents information on preventing, identifying, and responding to infectious disease in child care and schools. To order, visit [www.healthychildcare.org/](http://www.healthychildcare.org/)

## School Materials and Posters

Educators, staff, and parents can help slow the spread of colds and flu. The CDC offers information on preventing the flu, as well as, materials and tools for schools. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/flu/school/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/)

For direct questions regarding the flu, or flu vaccine, ask your doctor or nurse. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information. Additional resources include calling your local or state health department or contacting the CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

For additional immunization information, visit these AAP Web sites:

Childhood Immunization Support Program  
[www.cispimmunize.org](http://www.cispimmunize.org)

Early Education and Child Care Initiatives  
[www.healthychildcare.org](http://www.healthychildcare.org)

