

### Children Need a Flu Shot

Influenza (“the flu”) is more dangerous than the common cold for children. Each year, millions of children get sick with seasonal influenza; thousands of children are hospitalized and some children die from flu. Children, especially those younger than 5 years, are at higher risk for serious flu-related complications. The flu vaccine offers the best defense against getting the flu and spreading it to others. Getting vaccinated can reduce flu illnesses, doctor’s visits, missed work and school days, and prevent flu-related hospitalizations and deaths in children.

The single best way to protect your children from the flu is to get them vaccinated each year. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. Traditional flu vaccines (called “trivalent” vaccines) are made to protect against three flu viruses; an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus, and an influenza B virus. In addition, there are flu vaccines made to protect against four flu viruses (called “quadrivalent” vaccines). These vaccines protect against the same three viruses as the trivalent vaccine and an additional B virus.

Some reasons that the flu shot is encouraged for children:

- Children commonly need medical care because of influenza, especially before they turn 5 years old.
- Children younger than 5 years and especially those younger than 2 years are at high risk of serious influenza complications.
- Children of any age with chronic health problems like asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system also are at high risk of serious flu complications.
- Flu seasons vary in severity:
  - CDC estimates that since 2010, flu-related hospitalizations among children younger than 5 years ranged from 7,000 to 26,000 in the United States.
  - While relatively rare, some children die from flu each year. Since 2004-2005, flu-related deaths in children reported to CDC during regular flu seasons have ranged from 37 deaths to 171 deaths.

CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a seasonal flu vaccine. Keep in mind that vaccination is especially important for certain people who are high risk or who are in close contact with high risk persons. This includes children at high risk for developing complications from influenza illness, and adults who are close contacts of those children.

Some children 6 months through 8 years of age require two doses of influenza vaccine. Children 6 months through 8 years getting vaccinated for the first time, and those who have only previously gotten one dose of vaccine, should get two doses of vaccine this season. All children who have previously gotten two doses of vaccine (at any time) only need one dose of vaccine this season. The first dose should be given as soon as vaccine becomes available.

The second dose should be given at least 28 days after the first dose. The first dose “primes” the immune system; the second dose provides immune protection. Children who only get one dose but need two doses can have reduced or no protection from a single dose of flu vaccine. For more information regarding the flu vaccine, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). Lisa Bohrer, R.N.,BC, Community Health and Wellness Manager for PharmaCare is available to vaccinate children and adults ages 6 months and older.

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