



Central Michigan District Health Department

Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities



Jennifer Morse, MD, MPH, FAAFP
Medical Director

Steve Hall, RS, MS
Health Officer

Main Office

2012 E Preston Ave.
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858
Administration 989-773-5921
FAX: 989-773-4319

Branch Offices:

Arenac County

4489 West M-61
Suite 3
P.O. Box 734
Standish, MI 48658
989-846-6541
FAX: 989-846-0431

Clare County

815 N. Clare Ave.
Suite B
Harrison, MI 48625
989-539-6731
FAX: 989-539-4449

Gladwin County

103 N. Bowery
Gladwin, MI 48624
989-426-9431
FAX: 989-426-6952

Isabella County

2012 E. Preston Ave.
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858
989-773-5921
FAX: 989-773-4319

Osceola County

22054 Professional Dr.
Suite D
Reed City, MI 49677
231-832-5532
FAX: 231-832-1020

Marion Human Services

101 E. Main St.
P.O. Box 39
Marion, MI 49665
231-743-9877
FAX: 231-743-2140

Roscommon County

200 Grand Ave.
Suite A
Prudenville, MI 48651
989-366-9166

Dear Parent/Guardian:

December 14, 2022

Influenza ("the flu") is spreading quickly in our area. The number of school aged children going to urgent cares and emergency departments from the flu has more than doubled since the end of November. The number of influenza-like illnesses, which is having a fever with a cough and/or a sore throat, also continues to increase in our schools and childcare centers. Many schools and childcare centers have already had to close to influenza and influenza-like illness.

The flu is a viral illness that can cause fever, cough, chills, headache, muscle aches, runny nose, and sore throat. It can cause serious and even deadly illness in healthy children and adults, though this is more common in people with health problems. When someone has influenza, they almost always have a fever, and the cough is often severe. Influenza symptoms usually last 2 to 7 days. Note that influenza is not the same as the "stomach flu," which is a gastrointestinal (stomach and bowel) illness causing severe nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea that usually lasts 1 to 2 days.

The influenza virus spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes, causing droplets containing the virus to spread in the air. Uninfected people can get sick by being in close contact with these droplets (within 6 feet) and breathing them in or by touching surfaces the droplets fell onto. There are many things that can be done to keep our schools, homes, and communities "flu-free" and protect ourselves and our loved ones:

1. It's not too late to get vaccinated, and vaccination is the #1 MOST effective prevention against the flu and serious illness and death from the flu. Influenza vaccine is widely available through the local health department, area physicians, and pharmacies.
2. Children and adults should stay home when ill. We recommend that people sick with any influenza-like illness remain at home until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
3. Teach your family how to lower their risk of getting and spreading the influenza virus by:
 - Washing their hands often with soap and running warm water for at least 20 seconds. That is as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice. Make sure to clean under the fingernails also.
 - If a hand washing station is not available, use hand sanitizer properly. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes work well against influenza if they contain at least 60% alcohol. Throw wipes in the trash after use.
 - Coughing or sneezing into their upper shirt sleeve or elbow, not onto their hands.
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth. That's how germs enter the body.
4. Children over 2 years of age and adults can consider wearing a mask in public. Masks, especially KN95 or N95 respirators or other high-quality masks, should help protect you and others against respiratory germs such as the flu.
5. Seek medical care immediately if your child experiences any of the following symptoms: illness lasting longer than a week; fast breathing or trouble breathing; bluish skin color; not drinking enough fluids or not urinating (peeing); not waking up or not getting along with others as they normally do; being so irritable that the child does not want to be held; flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse coughing, or; fever with a rash.

We've included a fact sheet with this letter for more information but if you have any questions, please feel free to contact the health department with any questions.

Sincerely,

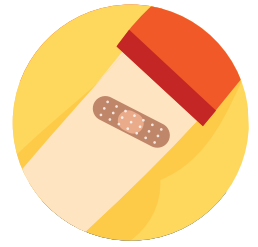
Jennifer Morse, MD, MPH, FAAFP
Medical Director

Please visit us at our website www.cmdhd.org



Flu:

A Guide for Parents



Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. Flu is different from a cold and usually comes on suddenly. Each year flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and tens of thousands of deaths in the United States.

Flu can be very dangerous for children. CDC estimates that between 2010 - 2020, between 6,000 and 27,000 children younger than 5 years old have been hospitalized from flu each year in the U.S. Flu vaccine is safe and helps protect children from flu.

What parents should know

How serious is flu?

While flu illness can vary from mild to severe, children often need medical care because of flu. Children younger than 5 years old and children of any age with certain long-term health problems are at increased risk of flu complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections. Some health problems that are known to make children more vulnerable to flu include asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system.

How does flu spread?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly by droplets made when someone with flu coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. A person also can get flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.

What are flu symptoms?

Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, feeling tired and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). Some people with flu will not have a fever.

Protect your child

How can I protect my child from flu?

The first and best way to protect against flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine for yourself and your child.

- Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older every year. Flu shots and nasal spray flu vaccines are both options for most children.
- It's especially important that young children and children with certain long-term health problems get vaccinated.
- Caregivers of children at higher risk of flu complications should get a flu vaccine. (Babies younger than 6 months are at higher risk for serious flu complications, but too young to get a flu vaccine.)
- Pregnant people should get a flu vaccine to protect themselves and their baby from flu. Research shows that flu vaccination during pregnancy can protect the baby from flu for several months after birth.
- Flu viruses are constantly changing so flu vaccines are updated often to protect against the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during the upcoming flu season.

Are flu vaccines safe?

Flu vaccines have an excellent safety record. Millions of people have safely received flu vaccines for decades. Flu shots and nasal spray flu vaccines are both options for vaccination. Different types of flu vaccines are licensed for different ages. Each person should get one that is appropriate for their age. CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend an annual flu vaccine for all children 6 months and older.

What are the benefits of getting a flu vaccine?

- **A flu vaccine can keep you and your child from getting sick.** When vaccine viruses and circulating viruses are matched, flu vaccination has been shown to reduce risk of getting sick with flu by about 40 to 60%.
- **Flu vaccines can keep your child from being hospitalized for flu in the pediatric intensive care unit.** One recent study showed that flu vaccine reduced children's risk of flu-related pediatric intensive care unit admission by 74%.
- **Flu vaccine can be life saving in children.**

A study using data from recent flu seasons found that flu vaccine reduced the risk of flu-associated death by half among children with higher risk medical conditions



and by nearly two-thirds among children without medical conditions.

- **Flu vaccination also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.**
- **Getting yourself and your child vaccinated also can protect others** who may be more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies and young children, older people, and people with certain long-term health problems.

What are some other ways I can protect my child against flu?

In addition to getting a flu vaccine, you and your child should take everyday actions to help prevent the spread of germs.

Stay away from people who are sick as much as possible to keep from getting sick yourself. If you or your child are sick, avoid others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. Also, remember to regularly cover your coughs and sneezes, wash your hands often, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and clean surfaces that may be contaminated with flu viruses. These everyday actions can help reduce your chances of getting sick and prevent the spread of germs to others if you are sick. However, a yearly flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu illness.

If your child is sick

What can I do if my child gets sick?

Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids.

If your child is 5 years or older and does not have a long-term health problems and gets flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed.

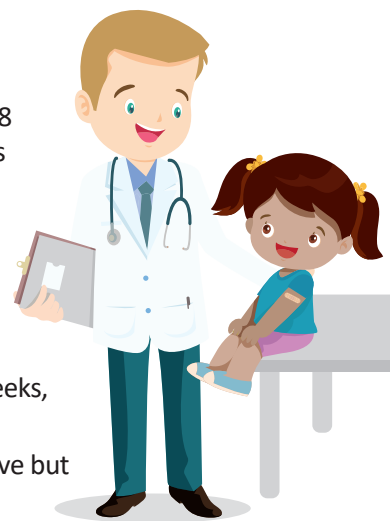
Children younger than 5 years old – especially those younger than 2 years – and children of any age with certain long-term health problems (including asthma or any lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system), are at higher risk of serious flu complications. Because children at higher risk of serious flu complications can benefit from early antiviral treatment of flu, parents of such children should contact their child's doctor if they develop flu symptoms.

What if my child seems very sick?

Even healthy children can get very sick from flu. If your child is experiencing the following emergency warning signs, you should go to the emergency room:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish lips or face
- Ribs pulling in with each breath
- Chest pain

- Severe muscle pain (child refuses to walk)
- Dehydration (no urine for 8 hours, dry mouth, no tears when crying)
- Not alert or interacting when awake
- Seizures
- Fever above 104°F
- In children less than 12 weeks, any fever
- Fever or cough that improve but then return or worsen
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions



This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptom that is severe or concerning.

Is there a medicine to treat flu?

Yes. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that can be used to treat flu illness. They can shorten your illness and make it milder, and they can prevent serious complications that could result in a hospital stay. Antivirals work best when started during the first two days of illness. Antiviral drugs are recommended to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example, people who are in the hospital) or people who are at higher risk of serious flu complications who get flu symptoms. Antivirals can be given to most children and pregnant people.

How long can a sick person spread flu to others?

People with flu may be able to infect others from one day before getting sick to up to five to seven days after. Severely ill people or young children may be able to spread the flu longer, especially if they still have symptoms.

Can my child go to school, day care, or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid spreading flu to other children or caregivers.

When can my child go back to school after having flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care, or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C)* or higher.

*Many authorities use either 100 (37.8 degrees Celsius) or 100.4 F (38.0 degrees Celsius) as a cut-off for fever, but this number can vary depending on factors such as the method of measurement and the age of the person.

For more information, visit

www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm or call 800-CDC-INFO



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention