

The Flu and Your Child

Your child could be exposed to two types of flu this flu season — seasonal flu or H1N1 flu (swine flu). Symptoms of either flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people sick with the flu will not have a fever.

Is the flu serious?

The flu can be serious for young children. The risk is highest in children younger than 2 years and children who have certain chronic medical conditions. These conditions include asthma or other lung problems, diabetes, weakened immune systems, kidney disease, heart problems and neurological and neuromuscular disorders. Children with these conditions can have more severe illness from the flu.

Is there a vaccine to protect my child from flu?

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against flu. Children should get both a seasonal flu vaccine and swine flu vaccine. This includes children 6 months old and young adults up to 18 years old. Children younger than 9 who are receiving the seasonal flu vaccine for the first time should get two doses of vaccine, about one month apart. Children younger than 10 who are receiving the swine flu vaccine should also have 2 doses of vaccine, about one month apart. Other people, including close contacts of children younger than 6 months and adults with certain chronic medical conditions, are recommended for vaccination too. Talk to your health care provider about who in your family needs a flu vaccine. Preservative-free vaccine is available in limited quantities.

Is there medicine to treat the flu?

Yes. Antiviral drugs can treat both seasonal flu and swine flu in adults and children. These medicines need to be prescribed by a doctor and they work best when started during the first two days of illness. Treatment with an antiviral medicine is not necessary for everyone. But those who are more likely to have serious illness from the flu, such as young children and children with chronic illness, should contact their health care provider for a recommendation about treatment.

What can I do if my child gets sick?

If your child is 5 years old or older and otherwise healthy and gets flu-like symptoms, consult your doctor and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids. If your child (especially younger than 2) has a medical condition like asthma, diabetes, or a neurological problem and develops flu-like symptoms, ask a doctor if your child should be examined. Younger children (especially children younger than 2) and children who have chronic medical conditions may be at higher risk of serious complications from flu, including swine flu. Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

Protect Your Child against Flu:



- Get a seasonal flu vaccine for yourself and your child to protect against seasonal flu viruses.
 - Get a swine flu vaccine for children 6 months old or older. Ask your doctor about whether you should get one too.
- Take – and encourage your child to take – everyday steps that can help prevent the spread of germs. This includes:
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. If you do not have a tissue, cough into the crook of your elbow, not your hand.
 - Wash your hands often in warm, soapy water for 15 to 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - If someone in the household is sick, try to keep the sick person in a separate room from others in the household, if possible.

For more information:

- Flu information — flu.gov
- Kentucky flu information — healthalerts.ky.gov
- Kentucky flu hotline — 1-877-843-7727
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information hotline — 1-800-CDC-INFO



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

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children. Keep your child home from school or day care for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)