



Influenza (Flu)

Seasonal and Swine (H1N1)

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.

What is influenza (flu)?

Flu is a viral illness. It is very infectious (catchy). Outbreaks of flu usually occur during the winter months. To help stop the spread of flu:

- Have all family members wash their hands often, throw away used tissues right away and not share plates, cups or utensils.
- Cover your mouth or nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough. Or, cough into your arm/elbow..
- Avoid contact with others. This includes staying home from day care and school.
- Your child may return to daycare and school 24 hours after fever is gone **without** using fever-reducing medicines.

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of these:

- Fever
- Body aches and headaches
- Sore throat
- Tiredness
- Chills
- Loss of appetite
- Itchy and watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Cough
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Sometimes, the flu can lead to pneumonia or other serious problems.

What is the treatment?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include giving your child:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol or other less costly store brand) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or other less costly store brand) may be given for fever, aches and pain. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your doctor how much medicine to give.

DO NOT give:

- Your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
- Acetaminophen to babies younger than 3 months of age without a doctor's advice.
- Ibuprofen to babies younger than 6 months of age without a doctor's advice.
- Acetaminophen and ibuprofen together. **DO NOT** alternate.
- Aspirin or any products containing aspirin or salicylates such as Pepto Bismol.
- Give lots of cool, clear liquids so that he does not get dehydrated (dried out).
 - Do not try to force your child to eat. It is normal to have less appetite with the flu.
 - If your child is vomiting, give small sips often.
- Coughing helps clear mucus from the chest and lungs.
 - Most children will not spit out the mucus but will swallow it into their stomachs. This is not a problem.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

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- Give cough and cold medicines only as advised by your child's doctor. This includes both prescription and over-the-counter medicines.
 - For children younger than 6 years of age – cough and cold medicines do not work in this age group. They also can cause serious side effects.
 - Do not give a child younger than 6 years old any medicine that is made for children over the age of 6.
 - Many brands of cough and cold medicines have the same kinds or have unnecessary ingredients. Using more than 1 brand or mixing brands can cause a serious overdose and harm in your child.
 - Do not use a combination cold medicine that contains acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Plenty of rest with a gradual return to normal activity.
- Avoid cigarette smoke and odor around your child.

Is there a way to shorten the course of the flu?

If your child has had flu symptoms less than 48 hours, call his doctor. Most of the time viral medicines are not needed. Your doctor will review the risks and benefits of these medicines with you as needed.

Can the flu be prevented?

Vaccines should be given in September or October each year.

- New vaccines are made each year for the types of flu that doctors think will be around that year.
- Your child will need a new vaccine each year.

Two types of flu vaccine can help prevent some types of flu – a shot and a nasal spray. The vaccine is advised for all children from 6 months to 19 years of age.

- Flu shots are given with a needle and contain a dead virus.
 - Shots can be given to children from 6 months to 19 years of age.
 - Children younger than 9 years old who have never received the vaccine will need to get 2 flu shots, at least one month apart.
 - Children with chronic health problems of all ages should be sure to receive a flu shot.
- A nasal spray that contains a weakened, live virus may be used in healthy children older than 2 years.
- Talk with your child's doctor about which type of flu vaccine is right for your child.

When should I call the doctor?

Call 911 or your local ambulance service right away if your child:

- Is so tired and weak that he hardly responds to you.
- Is working very hard to breathe or finds it hard to take a breath.
- Grunts when he breathes.
- Has a blue or dark purple color to the nail beds, lips or gums.
- Stops breathing for more than 10 seconds.
- Cannot speak while trying to breathe.
- Has any breathing problem that needs care **right away**.

Call your child's doctor if your child:

- Does not smile or show interest in play for at least a few minutes during a four-hour period.
- Wheezes or breathes harder than he did when he was seen by the doctor.
- Has chest retractions (skin pulling in around the ribs and chest when breathing)
- Has a tight feeling in the chest or chest pain.
- Cannot be calmed for at least a few minutes each hour using methods that usually work for your child, such as holding, rocking, pacifiers or soothing talk.

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Influenza, continued

- See signs of dehydration (drying out):
 - No urine for six to eight hours in an infant younger than one year old
 - No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than one year old
 - No tears when crying
 - Sunken eyes
 - Dry lips and mouth
- Pulls at his ears or shows signs of ear pain.
- Has any fever (temperature over 100.3°F) and is younger than 3 months old, or has a fever lasting longer than three days in older babies and children.
- You have any concerns about the way your child looks or feels.

Rarely, the infection can spread to other parts of the body. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has any of these:

- Is not better or still has a feeling of tiredness and weakness in 5 days.
- Seems better for a day and then becomes ill again.
- Confused or less responsive.
- Extreme weakness.
- Dizziness, faints or passes out.

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