



Health Services

Children, the Flu, and the Flu Vaccine

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. Information on this page summarizes vaccine recommendations for children.

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. Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.
- It is important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever. 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.
- **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. Flu vaccines can be obtained from your doctor, your clinic or other health care providers such as: UT Mobile Health Clinic and the Cameron County Health Department. For more information please see: www.TexasFlu.org.

If you have problems finding or obtaining the flu vaccine, see your school nurse for additional information or explore the website www.ImmunizeTexas.com .