

Influenza and Your Child: A Parent Guide to the Flu

We are currently in the peak of flu season and our school nurse has seen several students suspected of having influenza.

Here are few tips to consider and things you can do to protect your child from influenza, commonly known as “the flu,” which can be a potentially serious infection.

1. **Get the flu vaccine.** This year’s vaccine provides protection from the AH3N2 virus, influenza B virus, and the 2009 H1N1 virus. The vaccine is available by injection or by flu mist nasal spray. Your health care provider will explain which is best for your child. Flu vaccine is recommended for everyone age 6 months of age and older. Remember that it takes approximately 2 weeks for the flu vaccine to become effective. Check with your child’s health care provider regarding availability of the vaccine. **Flu vaccinations for children age 18 and under are also available at no charge at the Collier County Health Department. Call 252- 8595 in Naples or 252-7300 in Immokalee for more information.**
2. The flu can be especially dangerous for young children and children who have long term health conditions such as asthma, neurological conditions, chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and weakened immune systems.
3. **Take action to prevent the spread of germs.** Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person. Symptoms of the flu are fever of 100 degrees or higher, with sore throat or cough. Other symptoms may include runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people with influenza will not have a fever.
4. **Actions to help prevent the spread of the flu:**
 - Stay away from people who are sick.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after it is used. Teach children to cough and sneeze in their sleeve if tissues are not available.
 - Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - If your child has symptoms of the flu, notify the school. Children with the flu should stay home from school or day care for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Consult with your health care provider as needed.

For more information about the flu, please visit www.cdc.gov/flu or www.flu.gov or call 800-CDC-INFO.