

A Parent Guide to the Flu

Flu season is upon us and it's time to think about how you can protect your child from this potentially serious infection. Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease that can lead to serious complications, hospitalization or even death. Symptoms of influenza are a fever of 100 degrees or higher with cough or sore throat. Other symptoms may include headache, chills, fatigue, and muscle aches. 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.

Here are few things to do to protect your family from influenza, commonly known as "the flu."

1. **Get the flu vaccine.** This year's vaccine provides protection from three viruses that research suggests will be most common during the flu season: an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus and an influenza B virus. The vaccine is available by injection or "flu shot," by an intradermal shot which is just under the skin, or by nasal spray. Your health care provider will explain which is best for your child. Flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 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. Or contact the **Collier County Health Department, 252- 8595 in Naples or 252-7300 in Immokalee** for information about flu vaccine and cost.
2. **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 must stay home from school 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 <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm>.