

From Your NCH School Nurse:
Flu Season Is Here
Vaccinate to Protect You and Your Loved Ones

Now that the temperature is falling, we know that flu season is just around the corner. 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.

An annual flu vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu and flu-related complications that can lead to missed school, missed work, and worse. Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people can get very sick from flu and spread it to friends and loved ones. Children with long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart conditions, and weakened immune systems are at greater risk for flu complications. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older get a yearly flu vaccine. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for your body to develop an immune response, so it's important to get vaccinated now so you will be protected all season long. The vaccine can be given by injection or a "flu shot", by an intradermal shot, which is just under the skin, or by nasal-spray vaccine. Check with your healthcare provider to find out which type is best for you and your family.

Adult flu vaccine is available throughout our community. Check with your child's health care provider to find out more about flu vaccine availability for your children. Or call the Collier County Health Department at 252-8595 for more information about flu vaccine and cost. Other actions to help prevent the spread of the flu include:

- Frequent hand-washing
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after it is used.
- Teach your children to cough and sneeze into their sleeve if tissues are not available.

If your child does develop 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. Be sure to check with your child's health care provider as needed.