

Annual Flu Vaccination Continues To Be Best Way to Prevent Influenza

We are in the midst of a deadly flu season and annual vaccination remains the best preventive measure against influenza. The influenza epidemic is likely to continue for several more weeks, and flu activity can occur as late as May. As of February 9, 2018, 63 children in the U.S. have died from influenza this flu season and that number is expected to rise. It is estimated that 85 percent of the children who die from flu have not been vaccinated. Therefore, it is important to continue to recommend annual influenza vaccination to **everyone 6 months of age and older**, particularly contacts of children too young to be vaccinated and of children with high-risk underlying conditions.

The most important message to get out there is that people should still get vaccinated!

Please ensure that children 6 months through 8 years, who need 2 doses to be adequately protected, receive both doses 4 weeks apart. It is especially important to identify and vaccinate infants who turned 6 months old since the beginning of this year's flu season. See the AAP News article, [CDC urges vaccination for flu as hospitalizations rise](#).

Responses for families who hesitate to get influenza vaccine:

“I’ve heard that the flu vaccine is not effective” – Early reports from Australia this year indicated low effectiveness. However, this doesn’t mean it will be the same the United States, where vaccine effectiveness usually ranges from 30-60%. More importantly, even if you get a flu shot but still catch the flu, it will provide some protection. You will likely have less severe symptoms and are less likely to be hospitalized or die.



“I’m worried that the flu vaccine is not safe” – Flu vaccines have been given for more than 50 years and hundreds of millions of flu vaccines have been given safely. Flu vaccine safety is closely monitored by the FDA and the CDC.

“I’ve heard you can get sick from the flu vaccine” – Contrary to popular belief, you can’t get the flu from the flu vaccine! Some people may experience arm soreness, headache or muscle aches, but these are signs that your immune system is making the antibodies needed to fight the real flu when your body sees it. These symptoms are usually mild and last for one day or less.

“I’d rather just get through the flu on my own” – Even healthy kids and adults can have serious complications from flu. So far, there have been **63 pediatric deaths** in the US due to influenza, many in previously healthy children. Don’t take that chance.

“I don’t get that sick from the flu anyway” – Even healthy kids and adults can have serious complications from flu. Remember, even if your immune system is good in fighting flu symptoms, you can still spread the flu virus to someone else more vulnerable – a baby, an elderly person, or someone medically fragile, who are especially at risk for complications from flu

Many Strategies Exist to Reach Families

Informing families about the importance of influenza prevention and control through various messaging strategies can make a real difference. The recent [CDC Public Health Matters Blog](#) outlines how to talk to friends, family, and patients about flu vaccines. Share a link to this blog with families and encourage them to take important steps to protect themselves from influenza. The [Vaccine Finder](#) tool identifies the locations where influenza vaccine is available in a particular area.