

Prevent Flu – Get Vaccinated!

FIGHTING FLU IN CHILD CARE SETTINGS: BUILDING BLOCKS TO INCREASE INFLUENZA AWARENESS

WHAT IS THE FLU?

Influenza, or “the flu,” is a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract (nose, throat and lungs). The flu virus tends to spread from October to May, with most cases occurring in February. The flu is often confused with the common cold, but flu symptoms tend to develop quickly (usually 1 to 4 days after a person is exposed to the flu virus) and are usually more severe than the typical sneezing and congestion associated with a cold. Influenza is often accompanied with fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are also common symptoms in children. A person infected with the flu virus will typically suffer from the illness for approximately 7 to 10 days, with 5 to 6 days of limited activity and about 3 days of bed rest. A recent survey of mothers of children in child care* found that 63 percent are somewhat or very concerned their child(ren) will catch influenza in the child care setting.

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children 6 months through 18 years of age get vaccinated against the flu every year.

In addition, all household contacts (parents, grandparents, siblings, etc.) and caregivers of children age 0 up to age 5 (especially younger than 6 months), adults 50 years and older, and persons with high-risk medical conditions should get vaccinated against the flu every year. The bottom line is anyone who wants to reduce his or her risk of becoming ill with influenza or of spreading it to others, should get an annual influenza vaccination.

Despite their concerns about the flu, 43 percent of moms of children in child care* have NOT taken any children to get the flu vaccine within the past two years! (And 81 percent are incorrect or unsure about the age group recommended for vaccination by the CDC.)

ARE KIDS FLU TRANSMITTERS?

Children are two-to-three times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu because of their less-developed immune systems. About 41 percent of preschool children are cared for in organized child care settings at least part of the time, which means a considerable number of children are sharing toys and sharing germs.

School-aged children also tend to have higher rates of influenza infection because of their close contact with friends and classmates who frequently spread germs among one another. In fact, during bad flu seasons, nearly 30 percent of school-aged children get sick and miss about 38 million school days a year overall.

Surprisingly, nearly half (47 percent) of mothers surveyed* believe washing hands frequently is the most effective way to help prevent their families from catching influenza. While hand washing is important, the CDC recommends the flu vaccination as the most effective way to prevent influenza and help children (particularly those in child care settings) – and their families, friends, teachers, child care providers and communities – stay free of influenza during the flu season.

HOW SERIOUS IS THE FLU IN KIDS?

- More children die from the flu than from chicken pox, whooping cough and measles combined. In fact, nearly 400 children in the U.S. have died from influenza over the past five flu seasons.
- Approximately 20,000 children under the age of 5 are hospitalized due to the flu each year.
- Twenty-three percent of moms surveyed* said they are most concerned their child(ren) will pick up the common cold in the child care setting compared to just 20 percent who are concerned about the flu. Influenza is far more serious than the common cold.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT THE FLU VACCINE FOR YOUR CHILD(REN)!

Among mothers surveyed* who have not had their child(ren) vaccinated against the flu within the past two years, the most often cited reason (24 percent) is that their doctor did not tell them they need to get it.

* Online interviews were conducted with 755 mothers from across the U.S. who have at least one child eight years of age or younger who spends at least one hour per week in child care. Ipsos, a leading global research firm, conducted the interviews between August 13 and August 22, 2008.

Visit www.naccp.org or call 1-800-537-1118 for more information.

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