



## Influenza

Some parents think the flu is a stomach bug. But while children may have nausea, stomach pain and/or vomiting with flu, the key influenza symptoms in children include a high fever, chills and shakes, body aches, headaches and a dry hacking cough.

### **What causes flu in children?**

The flu is caused by one of three types of influenza viruses. Types A and B are responsible for the yearly flu epidemics, and type C flu virus causes sporadic mild illness. Type A flu virus is further divided into different subtypes based on the chemical structure of the virus.

### **How is flu spread among children?**

Flu is highly contagious, particularly when people share close quarters as children do in school classrooms. Flu is spread among children when a child either inhales infected droplets in the air (coughed up or sneezed by an infected person) or when the child comes in direct contact with an infected person's secretions. A person can be contagious one day before onset of symptoms and 5-7 days after being sick. This can happen, for example, when they share pencils at school or play computer games and share the remotes or share utensils such as spoons and forks. Hand to hand contact is also important to consider when thinking about how flu is spread.

### **What are flu symptoms in children?**

The symptoms of flu in children are more severe than symptoms of a childhood cold. Symptoms of flu in children start abruptly and usually cause kids to feel the worse during the first two or three days of onset. Flu symptoms in children may include:

- A high-grade fever up to 104 degrees F
- Chills and shakes with the fever
- Extreme tiredness
- Headache and body aches
- Dry, hacking cough
- Sore throat
- Vomiting and belly pain

### **Are there ways to prevent the flu in children?**

The number one way to prevent flu is to get an annual influenza vaccination. The CDC recommends that all people aged 6 months and older receive the flu vaccine to prevent influenza. Vaccinating children with the influenza vaccine each year helps protect them against flu.

Healthy children over age 2 who do not wheeze or do not have a history of asthma may have the option of getting the nasal spray influenza vaccine. Children aged 6 months and older can receive the flu shot.

Pregnant women and caregivers of children younger than 6 months or children with certain health conditions should be vaccinated.

**For more information about this subject please check:**

**The Center for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov/](http://www.cdc.gov/)**

**The American Academy of Pediatrics at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)**