

**Fact Sheets to
Inform Parents**

Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family during the 2009-2010 Flu Season

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends four main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at early childhood programs or at home:

- 1. Get your children vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available. Parents and caregivers of children less than 6 months of age should also get vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu because these children are at higher risk for flu complications and are too young to be vaccinated.
- 2. Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius measured by mouth) or signs of a fever (chills, feel very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating). Keeping sick children at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
- 3. Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Parents and child care providers should wash the hands of children who cannot yet wash themselves, and closely monitor children who have not yet mastered proper hand hygiene.
- 4. Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands. Teach your children how to do this.

If flu conditions become MORE severe:

- ▶ Decisions about the length of time staff and children with flu-like symptoms should stay home will be made by local public health officials based on the flu conditions in a particular area.
 - If a decision is made to extend the time sick people should stay home, **parents should keep their children at home for at least 7 days**, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have completely gone away.
 - **If a household member is sick, keep all children in the household home from school and early childhood programs for 5 days** from the time the first person in the household became sick. Parents should monitor themselves and their children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.



Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 flu season:

- ▶ Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick, your usual early childhood program closes, or school is dismissed. Check with your employer to find out if you can stay at home to care for your children, work from home, or set up a flexible work schedule. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home (such as care by relatives, neighbors, co-workers, or friends).
- ▶ Plan to monitor the health of your children and others in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- ▶ Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at higher risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and children with certain chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.
- ▶ Update emergency contact lists.
- ▶ Collect games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained if early childhood programs are closed, school is dismissed, or your child is sick and must stay home.
- ▶ Talk to your early childhood program and school about their pandemic or emergency plan.

For more information:

- ▶ **Visit: www.flu.gov**
- ▶ **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov

Action Steps for Parents of Children at Higher Risk for Flu Complications

Children with chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, metabolic conditions, neurologic and neuromuscular disorders, and pregnant women are at higher risk of having complications from flu. In addition, all children younger than 5 years old are at higher risk of flu complications compared to older children. If you are not sure if any of your children are at higher risk for flu complications, please check with a doctor.

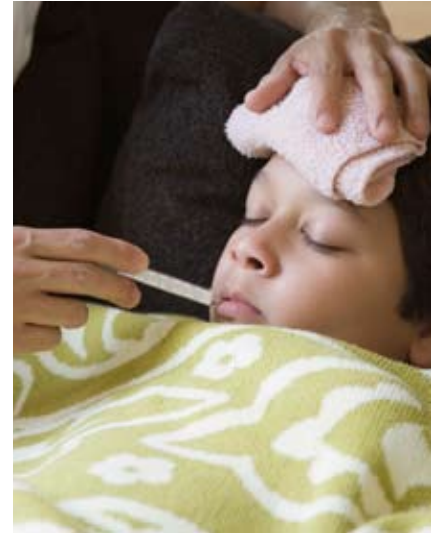
Keep children at higher risk for flu complications from getting sick with the flu

- ▶ **Make sure your child's hands are washed often** – or help your younger child wash them – for 20 seconds with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand cleaner. Alcohol-based hand cleaners can be toxic if swallowed, so keep them in a place that only you can access when you need to use it.
- ▶ Have your child **cough and sneeze into a tissue** or into his or her elbow or shoulder if a tissue is not available. Make sure your child throws tissues away right after use and washes his or her hands.
- ▶ **Keep your child away from people who are sick.**
- ▶ **Clean surfaces and objects that your child frequently touches.** Wipe these surfaces with a household disinfectant that is usually used, following the directions on the product label. Additional disinfection of these surfaces beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
- ▶ When there is flu in your community, consider your child's risk of exposure if they attend public gatherings. In communities with a lot of flu, **people who are at risk of complications from flu should consider staying away from public gatherings** such as sporting events and concerts.
- ▶ If flu is severe in your community, talk to your doctor and child's school or early childhood program to **develop a plan on how to handle your child's special needs.**
- ▶ **Get your children over the age of 6 months vaccinated** for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.



Recognize if your children are sick

Some children may not be able to tell you about their symptoms, which can result in a delay in responding to their illness. It is important to watch carefully for the signs and symptoms of flu or unusual behavior that may be a sign your child is sick. Symptoms of flu include fever or chills *and* cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, and vomiting. A fever is a temperature measured by mouth with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). If you are not able to measure a temperature, signs and symptoms that may indicate your child has a fever include chills, feeling very warm to the touch, having a flushed appearance, or sweating.



Watch for emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention.

These warning signs include one or more of the following:

- fast breathing, trouble breathing, shortness of breath, or stopping breathing;
- bluish, purplish, or gray skin color especially around the lips and the inside of the mouth, or around the nails;
- not drinking enough fluids, refusing to drink;
- not urinating, decreased number of wet diapers, or no tears when crying;
- severe or persistent vomiting;
- not waking up or not interacting (e.g. unusually quiet and inactive, no interest in playing, no interest in favorite toy);
- being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, or cannot be consoled;
- pain or pressure in the chest or stomach;
- sudden dizziness;
- confusion; and
- flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

Please share this information with your child's teacher or other caregivers, so they can tell you if they notice your child is not feeling well.

Tips for taking care of high risk children with the flu

- ▶ **Contact your doctor immediately if your child is sick.** This is important because the antiviral medicines used to treat flu work best when started within the first 2 days of getting sick. Your doctor will tell you what special care is needed for your child.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child at home** until at least 24 hours after your child no longer has a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keep your child home unless they need to go to the doctor. **Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks) to prevent dehydration. For infants, use electrolyte drinks such as Pedialyte®.
- ▶ **If your child has a fever, use fever-reducing medicines that your doctor** recommends based on your child's age. Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) **should not** be given to children or teenagers; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- ▶ **Keep your sick child in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for the sick child.



Additional information about caring for sick household members can be found at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm.

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Action Steps for Parents if Child Care or Early Childhood Programs are Closed or Children are Sick and Must Stay Home

- ▶ Have activities for your children to do while at home. Pull together games, books, DVDs and other items to keep your family entertained.
- ▶ Find out if your employer will allow you to stay at home to care for sick household members or children whose early childhood programs have closed. Ask if you can work from home. If this is not possible, find other ways to care for your children at home.
- ▶ Try to develop safe backup child care arrangements with neighbors, friends, co-workers, or church groups. These should consist of small groups of children (for example, groups with 6 or fewer children) and have a stable child care provider.
- ▶ Get children from 6 months to 5 years of age vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines become available. Infants younger than 6 months of age are particularly vulnerable to flu because they are too young to be vaccinated. All persons (including parents) who live with and care for a child less than 6 months old should be vaccinated against both seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu. Vaccines should be considered for anyone who is at higher risk for complications from seasonal flu or 2009 H1N1 flu.

Tips for taking care of children (and other household members) with the flu

- ▶ **Stay home if you or your child is sick** until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick children at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others. Sick people should stay home even if they are taking antiviral medicines.
- ▶ **Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water** often and especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly dirty, you can use alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- ▶ **Keep sick household members in a separate room** (a sick room) in the house as much as possible to limit contact with household members who are not sick. Consider designating a single person as the main caregiver for sick people.
- ▶ **Monitor the health of the sick child and any other household members** by checking for fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius measured by mouth) and other symptoms of flu. Symptoms of flu include fever or chills *and* cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, and vomiting.
- ▶ **Watch for emergency warning signs** that need urgent medical attention. These warning signs include one or more of the following:
 - fast breathing, trouble breathing, shortness of breath, or stopping breathing;
 - bluish, purplish, or gray skin color especially around the lips and the inside of the mouth, or around the nails;



- not drinking enough fluids, refusing to drink;
 - not urinating, decreased number of wet diapers, or no tears when crying;
 - severe or persistent vomiting;
 - not waking up or not interacting (e.g., unusually quiet and inactive, no interest in playing, no interest in favorite toy);
 - being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, or cannot be consoled;
 - pain or pressure in the chest or stomach;
 - sudden dizziness;
 - confusion; and
 - flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
- ▶ **Check with your doctor about any special care** needed for household members who may be at higher risk for complications from flu. This includes children younger than 5 years of age, pregnant women, people of any age who have certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people age 65 years and older.
- ▶ **Have the sick household member wear a facemask** – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from flu.
- ▶ **Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines or fever-reducing medicines** for sick household members. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers; it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye’s syndrome.
- ▶ **Make sure sick household members get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks) to prevent dehydration. For infants, use electrolyte drinks such as Pedialyte®.

If your health department says that flu conditions have become more severe

- ▶ **Extend the time sick children stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after their symptoms have gone away.
- ▶ **If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters and children in child care or early childhood programs home** for 5 days from the time the first household member became sick. Parents should monitor themselves and their children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

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