



## A FACT SHEET FOR PROVIDERS

### All Children 6 to 23 Months Old Should Get Flu Shot

#### A New Recommendation

Beginning this influenza season, CDC recommends that all children 6 months to 23 months old get a flu shot.

#### Children Less Than 2 More Likely to Be Hospitalized

Recent studies have shown that children less than 2 years old – even healthy children – are more likely than older children to end up in the hospital with serious complications if they get influenza. These complications can include pneumonia, dehydration, worsening of long-term medical problems like heart disease or asthma, encephalopathy, and other bacterial infections, including sinus and ear infections. In some cases, these complications can lead to death.

**To protect their health, all children 6 months to 23 months old should be vaccinated against the flu.** (The flu shot is not approved for use in children less than 6 months old.)

#### The Studies

Two studies published in 2000 showed the same results: that otherwise healthy children under 2 years old were more likely to be hospitalized for serious influenza complications than older, healthy children. These studies were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of Pediatrics*.

Based on this information, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) – a group that advises CDC on vaccinations – first moved to “encourage” vaccination among this age group. This season, that was strengthened to a “recommendation,” which is the strongest endorsement for vaccination.

#### Influenza-Related Deaths in Children Last Season

During last year’s influenza season, CDC received reports of 152 influenza-related deaths among children (people under 18 years old) from 40 states.

- All of these children had influenza infection diagnosed by laboratory tests.
- Most of the children were less than 5 years old.
- Twenty-seven percent of the children had a condition that placed them at high risk for serious complications from influenza and were recommended for vaccination by ACIP. Thirty-one percent had some other underlying medical condition. Forty percent of the children were previously healthy.
- Of the 135 children who died that could have been vaccinated, only 5 were “adequately” vaccinated against influenza. Seventy-six children had not been vaccinated against influenza at all.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu), or call the CDC Flu Information Line at (800) CDC-INFO.

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