

Protect your Child from Flu, and the Babysitter, Too!

You've done your homework, researching and interviewing to find the best care for your child, but is your caregiver—nanny, babysitter, daycare worker or family member—protected against the flu?



Flu takes a big toll on young children. Each year in the United States, an average of 20,000 children younger than 5 are hospitalized because of flu-related complications. As many as 1 in 5 children under age 5 may have to see the doctor, visit the ER or other urgent care for treatment for flu. And tragically, around 50 to 100 children die from this serious disease each year.

That is why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children older than 6 months get vaccinated against the flu. CDC also recommends that close contacts, especially family members and caregivers, of children younger than 5 get a flu vaccine each year to provide added protection to this high-risk group.

Children under 6 months are too young to receive the flu vaccine, but they are among the most vulnerable to develop serious, even fatal, complications from flu. This makes vaccination of their close contacts especially critical.

“To significantly decrease your child’s chances of getting the flu, we encourage parents, all family members, and caregivers to get vaccinated as soon as flu vaccine becomes available in your community,” says Dr. Anne Schuchat, Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The flu is a contagious disease that can cause symptoms such as high fever, sore throat, coughing, extreme tiredness, runny or stuffy nose, and even nausea and diarrhea in children. It can easily spread from person to person. Yearly flu vaccination should begin as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the flu season, into December, January, and beyond.

“Vaccination is the single best protection against the flu,” says Dr. Schuchat.

While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine is designed to protect best against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season. The vaccine can protect you from getting sick from these three viruses or it can make your illness milder if you get a different flu virus.

For more information about the flu vaccine, contact your doctor or local health department. To find a clinic near you, visit www.flucliniclocator.org and enter your ZIP code. To learn more, call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/flu.