



# Healthy habits help keep your family well.

## Take care: Cover coughs and sneezes. Keep hands clean.

Healthy habits can protect you and your children from getting germs or spreading germs at home, work and school. Simple actions can stop germs and prevent illnesses.

**Cover your mouth and nose.** Use a tissue when you cough or sneeze and drop it in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose as best you can.

**Clean your hands often.** Clean your hands every time you cough or sneeze. Hand washing stops germs. Alcohol-based gels and wipes also work well.

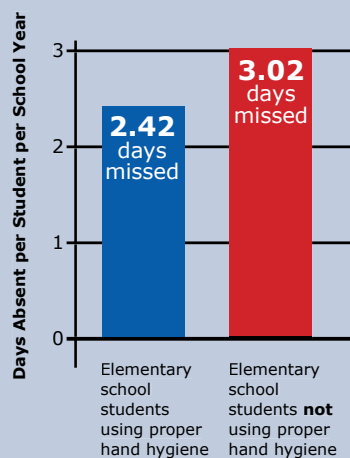
**Remind your children to practice healthy habits, too.** Germs that cause colds, coughs, flu and pneumonia can spread easily.

**Healthy habits help reduce illnesses and sick days.** Feel good about doing the right things to stay well.

## Healthy habits stop germs. At home, work and school.

This message is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health and Human Services. To learn more, please visit [www.cdc.gov/germstopper](http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper).

### Cleaning Hands Keeps Students In School

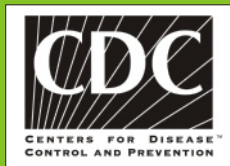


**Flu is a serious contagious disease**

**Each year in the United States, on average:**

- **More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications.**
- **20,000 of those hospitalized are children younger than 5 years old.**
- **36,000 people die from flu.**

**Take action to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu.**



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# **CDC Says “Take 3” Steps To Fight The Flu**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges you to take the following steps to protect yourself and others from influenza.

# 1

## **Take time to get a flu vaccine.**

- CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.
- While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects 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.
- Getting a vaccine is very important for people at high risk for serious flu complications, including young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart or lung disease, and people 65 and older.
- People who live with or care for those at high risk should also get a flu vaccine to protect their high-risk contact.

# 2

## **Take everyday preventive actions.**

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get the flu, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

# 3

## **Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them.**

- If you do get the flu, antiviral drugs are an important treatment option. (They are not a substitute for vaccination.)
- Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body.
- Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. This could be especially important for people at high risk.
- For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).
- Flu symptoms include fever (usually high), headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches.

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

# the flu



## A Guide for Parents

### What is the flu?

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs that is caused by influenza virus. The flu can spread from person to person. Most people with flu are sick for about a week, but then feel better. However, some people (especially young children, pregnant women, older people, and people with chronic health problems) can get very sick and some can die.

### What are the symptoms of the flu?

Most people with the flu feel tired and have fever (usually high), headache, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and sore muscles. Some people, especially children, may also have stomach problems and diarrhea. Cough can last two or more weeks.

### How does the flu spread?

People that have the flu usually cough, sneeze, and have a runny nose. This makes droplets with virus in them. Other people can get the flu by breathing in these droplets, getting them in their nose or mouth, or touching contaminated surfaces.

### How long can a sick person spread the flu to others?

Healthy adults may be able to spread the flu from 1 day **before** getting sick to up to 5 days **after** getting sick. This can be longer in children and in people who don't fight disease as well (people with weakened immune systems).

### How can I protect my child from the flu?

A flu vaccine is the best way to protect against the flu. CDC recommends that all children from the ages of 6 months up to their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday get a flu vaccine every fall or winter (children getting a vaccine for the first time need two doses).

- Flu shots can be given to children 6 months and older.
- A nasal-spray vaccine can be given to healthy children 2 years and older (children under 5 years old who have had wheezing in the past year or any child with chronic health problems should get the flu shot).

You can protect your child by getting a flu vaccine for yourself too. Also encourage your child's close contacts to get a flu vaccine. This is very important if your child is younger than 5 or has a chronic health problem like asthma (breathing disease) or diabetes (high blood sugar levels).

### Is there medicine to treat the flu?

There are antiviral drugs for children 1 year and older that can make your child feel better and get better sooner. But these drugs need to be approved by a doctor. They should be started during the first 2 days that your child is sick for them to work best. Your doctor can discuss with you if these drugs are right for your child.

# What Can YOU Do?

**How else can I protect my child against flu?**

1. Take time to get a flu vaccine and get your child vaccinated too.
2. Take everyday steps to prevent the spread of germs. This includes:
  - Clean *your* hands often and cover your coughs and sneezes
  - Tell your child to:
    - Stay away from people who are sick
    - Clean hands often
    - Keep hands away from face
    - Cover coughs and sneezes to protect others (it's best to use a tissue and throw it away).

**What should I use for hand cleaning?**

Washing hands with soap and water (for as long as it takes to sing the *Happy Birthday* song twice) will help protect your child from many different germs. When soap and water are not available, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used (the gels should be rubbed into your hands until they are dry).

**What can I do if my child gets sick?**

Consult your doctor and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks a lot of fluids. If your child is older than 2 years, you can buy medicine (over-the-counter) without a prescription that might make your child feel better. Be careful with these medicines and follow the instructions on the package. **But never give aspirin or medicine that has aspirin in it** to children or teenagers who may have the flu.

**What if my child seems very sick?**

- Call or take your child to a doctor right away if your child:
- has a high fever or fever that lasts a long time
  - has trouble breathing or breathes fast
  - has skin that looks blue
  - is not drinking enough
  - seems confused, will not wake up, does not want to be held, or has seizures (uncontrolled shaking)
  - gets better but then worse again
  - has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes) that get worse

**Can my child go to school if he or she is sick?**

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children.

**Should my child go to school if other children are sick?**

It is not unusual for some children in school to get sick during the winter months. If many children get sick, it is up to you to decide whether to send your child to school. You might want to check with your doctor, especially if your child has other health problems.

**When can my child go back to school after having the flu?**

Keep your child home from school until his or her temperature has been normal for 24 hours. Remind your child to cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing, to protect others (you may want to send some tissue and wipes or gels with alcohol in them to school with your child).