

Influenza (“the flu”) is a sudden, respiratory disease that spreads easily. It is characterized by the sudden onset of fever, body aches, sore throat, headache and cough. Approximately one in four children will also have vomiting, diarrhea and nausea.

- Any staff or child suspected of having influenza should not attend child care.
- Wash hands frequently using soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds (This is generally around the time it takes to sing the ABC’s). Dry hands with paper towels or automatic hand dryers, if possible. If cloth towels are used, replace them with clean towels several times a day. Each child should have their own cloth towel. Young children should be instructed and assisted to ensure proper hand washing. Restrooms should be checked regularly to ensure that soap and towels are available.
- Proper hand washing is particularly important after wiping your or someone else’s nose, or after contact with drool, saliva or nose drainage.
- Influenza can be spread from coughs or sneezes. Make sure tissues are available for runny noses and sneezing. Staff and children should cover their mouth with their upper arm or a tissue when coughing and use a tissue when sneezing or blowing their nose. Tissues should be thrown away immediately, and then hands should be washed. Make sure tissues are available in the day-care business and transport vehicles for runny noses and sneezing.
- Closing a child care business in the event of an outbreak is usually not recommended.
- All children and staff should avoid sharing of saliva by not sharing glasses, forks, spoons, toothbrushes, and toys.
- In the child care, frequently clean commonly used surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, eating surfaces, toys, etc. Commercial disinfectants or bleach solutions should be used. (Mixing ¼ cup bleach with 1 gallon of water makes bleach solution).

Vaccination Guidelines for Staff

The influenza vaccine is the best defense against the influenza virus however certain people have a greater risk for developing serious illness if they get influenza. People who work in a child care business are recommended to get the vaccine because they are able to spread it to children who may be at risk for getting serious illness. If you fall into one of the following age-groups you should get the influenza vaccine:

- persons aged ≥ 50 years, especially those over age 65;
- pregnant women;
- health-care personnel who provide direct patient care;
- household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children aged < 6 months.

Vaccination Guidelines for Children

Many children are also recommended to get the influenza vaccine. The following groups should get the influenza vaccine:

- children between the 6 and 23 months of age;
- anyone older than 6 months of age with a chronic medical condition (e.g. heart or lung problems including asthma, etc.);
- anyone older than 6 months of age who requires regular medical follow-up or was hospitalized during the preceding year because of diabetes, cancer, kidney problems, etc.;
- anyone between the ages of 6 months to 18 years of age receiving long-term aspirin therapy because of developing Reye’s syndrome after influenza;
- children who live in homes where there is a child under 6 months of age.

Any otherwise healthy non-pregnant person between the ages of 5 and 49 may get the nasal influenza vaccine (FluMist®).