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## *Information for You from Your Health Care Team*

### **Getting Ready For Flu Season**

Flu is a viral illness that can cause fever, chills, weakness, headache, muscle ache, cough, runny nose and vomiting. It's different from a cold. Kids with flu feel much sicker, look miserable and usually stay on bed for several days.

Flu infection can be spread from person-to-person through direct hand-to-hand contact, from the air by coughing or sneezing, and indirectly from infected surfaces. Over 100,000 people in the US get hospitalized each year and about 20,000 people die because of flu. Children younger than two years old, especially those with chronic medical conditions, are likely to be hospitalized. Kids with AIDS, asthma, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease are at high risk for complications from the flu.

There are safe and effective flu vaccines available that can protect kids with chronic health conditions and those people in contact with or caring for them. The best time to get a flu shot is in October and November, before the flu season peaks between December and April. You won't get flu from the shots since the viruses used in the vaccine have been killed.

Flu infection is slightly different from the previous year because influenza viruses change often. For this reason, a new flu vaccine is developed each year. Children less than nine years old who are getting their first flu shot need another dose a month later. After that, kids need only one dose annually.

Like any medicine, flu shots may cause serious reactions. If you or your child have severe allergy to eggs or to previous flu shots, you need to ask your doctor before getting the flu vaccine. You also need to know if there's a need to reschedule the vaccination in cases of severe illness. Mild side effects include low-grade fever and soreness at the injection site.

The best way to prevent you and your child from flu is by practicing good hygiene. Use facial tissues for a runny nose. Wash your hands before and after getting in contact with someone with flu. Disinfect contaminated surfaces.

Here are some suggestions if your child gets the flu: Antiviral agents may be given to kids over a year old. These can speed recovery if given during the first two days of the illness. Usually bed rest, extra fluids, easy-to-digest meals and acetaminophen can help the child feel better. Avoid giving aspirin for flu because of its strong association with Reye syndrome, an illness affecting the liver and the brain.

For more information, consult your own physician or call the Pediatric and Adolescent Center – University Health Care Center at 315-464-4357. Additional information is available at the Center for Disease Control website ([www.cdc.gov/nip/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/flu)).