

# the flu

## Information for Schools on Flu Vaccines

### What is influenza or “the flu”?

The flu is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs. It is spread easily by coughing, sneezing or talking. Most people are sick for about a week and then feel better. Unfortunately people can get very sick from the flu and some people may die (more frequently children and older adults). In the U.S., an average of 71 children have died each flu season over the last 3 years from flu or flu related illnesses.

### What are the symptoms of the flu?

People with the flu develop a high fever, headache, dry cough, sore throat and achy muscles very quickly. Children may have stomach problems. Some people with the flu have NO symptoms at all and can still spread flu to others.

### How can students be protected from the flu?

Getting flu vaccine is the best way to protect children and adults from the flu. Flu vaccine is now recommended for:

- children ages 6 months thru 18 years
- those in close contact with children ages birth thru 18 years

### What can I do to protect students?

**Get vaccinated** and encourage others in contact with children to be vaccinated - parents, siblings, teachers, secretaries and other support staff. Getting vaccinated is especially important for those who take care of infants younger than 6 months of age. These babies are too young to be given vaccine.

### Is flu vaccine recommended for children in schools?

Yes. CDC and MDCH recommend that children 6 months of age and older receive flu vaccine to help them stay healthy, although the vaccine is not required for school or daycare entry.

**Do students (and adults) have to get a shot?**

No. There are currently 2 types of vaccine - a shot and a nasal-spray. Some children may need 2 doses of vaccine. Health care providers can determine which type of vaccine can be given and how many doses are needed.

**How often should students be vaccinated?**

To be protected, children and adults need to be given flu vaccine every year - usually in the fall or winter months.

**Are flu vaccines safe?**

Yes, flu vaccines are safe and can be given with other vaccines. It is important to understand that the chance of being harmed from this disease is much greater than any chance of being harmed from vaccination.

**Are there side effects from the flu vaccine?**

Most adults and children have little or no problems after receiving flu vaccine. There may be soreness or redness where the shot was given. The nasal flu vaccine can sometimes cause a stuffy nose.

**What if a student's family cannot afford vaccine?**

Children 18 years of age and younger may be eligible for publicly purchased vaccines through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. To learn more about the VFC program contact your local health department or health care provider.

**Where can I get more information?**

Contact your health care provider or local health department  
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention • [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu)  
Michigan Dept of Community Health • [michigan.gov/flu](http://michigan.gov/flu)  
Childhood Influenza Coalition • [preventchildhoodinfluenza.org](http://preventchildhoodinfluenza.org)  
Families Fighting Flu • [familiesfightingflu.org](http://familiesfightingflu.org)