



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

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Health Services Newsletter

IT'S FLU SEASON

Seasonal influenza (flu) is still active in the **United States**. The flu virus causes serious illness that may result in hospitalization or death. It mostly affects the respiratory system (ears, nose, throat and lungs), but may also affect the whole body. The flu season usually starts in the fall and ends in the spring. People can get the flu more than once per year and many times in their lives. **Influenza viruses are unpredictable, so it's wise** to do everything possible to protect yourself, fellow Head Start staff and children in your program!

It is important to know the flu can make some people sicker than others. These people include young children, people 65 and older, pregnant women, and people with chronic medical conditions, such as: asthma, diabetes mellitus, immunosuppression, or neurologic disorders. But, even healthy people can get very sick and sometimes die from influenza. That is why vaccination remains the most important step in protecting against influenza and its complications. The flu vaccine is safe, does not cause the flu, and helps prevent spreading the flu from person to person. There are several seasonal **influenza vaccines** available for the 2013-2014 influenza season.



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TIME TO GET THE FLU VACCINE NOW!

Germs are everywhere – on every surface that people touch and also in the air we breathe. When children first enter Early Head Start or Head Start, they are more vulnerable to infectious diseases because it may be their first exposure to germs that cause common infections. They may be too young to have received the flu vaccine to be fully protected. Infants younger than 6 months are not able to receive the flu vaccine. Children in your program can easily pass germs to each other when they put their hands in their mouth and they play and eat close together.

Children and adults can spread the flu virus when they:

- Have been infected but are not yet showing symptoms of illness.
- Are developing an illness.
- Are recovering from an illness.

Once flu viruses start circulating, it can be very challenging to keep the germs from spreading in your program.

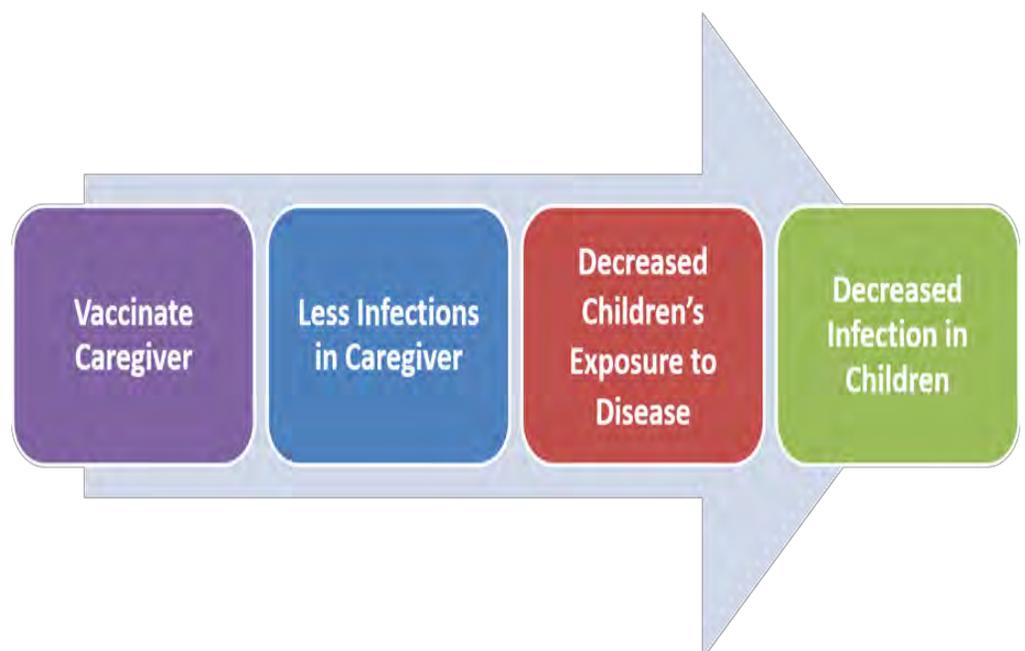
FOR YOUR FAMILY NEWSLETTER

YOU CAN TAILOR THE FOLLOWING TO INCLUDE IN YOUR FAMILY NEWSLETTER

Now is a great time to prepare for the flu season! The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend all children aged 6 months and older, especially those with long-term chronic health conditions, get the flu vaccine every year. We encourage all our families to contact their doctor about getting the flu vaccine for their family.

I'VE HEARD ABOUT SOMETHING CALLED "COCOONING": WHAT IS THIS?

Cocooning is a vaccination strategy that aims to protect children from disease by immunizing those who care for them.





PREVENT THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Once flu viruses start circulating, it can be very challenging to keep the germs from spreading in your program. Remember, the single-best strategy is to suggest staff, children, and family members be vaccinated every year for seasonal influenza as soon as vaccines are available.

You can also review your current policies and procedures designed to protect children and staff from contagious diseases.

- [Short term exclusion policy](#)
- [Hand washing policy](#): Also see the [CDC Handwashing Saves Lives](#) website and [Cover your Cough or Sneeze](#) handout for more resources.
- [Food Safety and Sanitation](#)
- [Diapering Policy](#)
- [Practice routine cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting of surfaces and toys](#). Germs inevitably spread to surfaces and objects. That is why surfaces and objects must be cleaned and disinfected on a regular schedule and after soiling with blood or body fluids. You can also consult the **[Routine Schedule for Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting](#)** in *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd edition*.
- And lastly, encourage staff to STAY HOME WHEN ILL! Children as well as staff with respiratory symptoms (cough, runny nose, or sore throat) and fever should stay at home to avoid infecting others.

I don't get sick, so why should I get a flu vaccine?

Even healthy people can get sick enough to miss work or school for a significant amount of time or be hospitalized.

When you get the flu shot, you protect yourself plus all the children in your program. This is especially true for infants younger than 6 months of age who are not yet old enough to get a flu shot.

Also, when you get a flu shot and urge others to do the same, you are modeling the healthiest behaviors possible. It's like saying "I get the flu shot because I think it's important!"

If you don't like shots, ask your doctor if you are able to get a "shotless influenza vaccine" that is given as a spray in the nose.

*The nasal spray vaccine is appropriate for most healthy, non-pregnant people ages 2 through 49 years old. Encourage families to discuss with their health care provider.

See the [CDC fact sheet, No More Excuses: You Need a Flu Vaccine!](#)

RESOURCES

Caring for Our Children Resources

1. Caring for Our Children, Standard 3.3.0.1: <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/3.3>
2. Caring for Our Children, Standard 3.6.1.1: <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/3.6.1.1>
3. Caring for Our Children, Standard 7.3.3: <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/7.3.3>
4. Caring for Our Children, Standard 7.3.3.1: <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/7.3.3.1>
5. Caring for Our Children, Standard 7.3.3.2: <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/7.3.3.2>

Other Resources

1. **National Resource Center** <http://nrckids.org/index.cfm/resources/state-licensing-and-regulation-information/>
2. www.aap.org/immunization
3. Flu information for caregivers and families:
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/everyday_preventive.pdf
www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/
www.cdc.gov/flu
www.familiesfightingflu.org
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/infantcare.htm>

Fostering a culture of health and wellness for Head Start children, families, and staff.

NATIONAL CENTER ON HEALTH

Our Goal:

To help Head Start and Early Head Start programs implement best practices and effective approaches within medical and dental care access, health awareness, healthy active living, emergency preparedness, and environmental safety to support healthy outcomes and school readiness for young children and their families.

CONTACT US!

The National Center on Health welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to nchinfo@aap.org or call (888) 227-5125.

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School readiness begins with health!

