

the flu

Information for Schools on Influenza and Vaccines

What is influenza or “the flu”?

The flu is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by flu viruses. There are many different flu viruses that can make people sick. The flu spreads easily by coughing and sneezing. Many people get the flu every year. Some people can get very sick, and some may even die.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

People who have the flu often get a high fever, headache, muscle aches, dry cough, and sore throat very quickly. Some people who get the flu have NO symptoms at all, but they can still spread the flu to others.

How can students be protected from the flu?

Flu vaccine is the single best way to protect children and adults from getting the flu. Flu vaccine is recommended every year for everyone 6 months of age and older. It is also important to make sure students stay home from school if they are sick.

What can I do to protect students?

Get a flu vaccine and encourage others in contact with children to get vaccinated – parents, siblings, teachers, secretaries and other support staff. Getting vaccinated is especially important for those who take care of infants less than 6 months of age because these babies are too young to get flu vaccine.

Is flu vaccine recommended for children in schools?

Yes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan Department Community Health (MDCH) recommend that children 6 months of age and older receive flu vaccine to help them stay healthy.

What kinds of flu vaccine can students get?

School-aged children can get either a shot or a nasal spray. Some children may need 2 doses of flu vaccine. Healthcare providers should determine which type of flu vaccine a child can get and how many doses are needed.

How often should students be vaccinated?

Flu vaccines can change from year to year, so children and adults need to get flu vaccine every year. The vaccine can be given as soon as it becomes available (as early as August) and throughout the flu season until the vaccine expires (typically June 30).

Are flu vaccines safe?

Yes, flu vaccines are safe and can be given with other vaccines. It is safer to get the flu vaccine than it is to get the flu.

Are there side effects from the flu vaccine?

Most children and adults have little or no problems after getting a flu vaccine. Side effects are often mild, like soreness or redness where the shot was given or a stuffy nose after getting the nasal spray.

What if a student's family cannot afford vaccine?

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

Where can I get more information?

Contact your healthcare provider or local health department.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: cdc.gov/flu

Michigan Department of Community Health: michigan.gov/flu

Childhood Influenza Coalition: preventchildhoodinfluenza.org

Families Fighting Flu: familiesfightingflu.org