

Children, the Flu, and the Flu Vaccine

On This Page

Influenza is dangerous for children

Influenza (“the flu”) is more dangerous than the common cold for children. Each year, many children get sick with seasonal influenza; some of those illnesses result in death.

- Children commonly need medical care because of influenza, especially before they turn 5 years old.
- Severe influenza complications are most common in children younger than 2 years old.
- Children with chronic health problems like asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system are at especially high risk of developing serious flu complications.
- Each year an average of 20,000 children under the age of 5 are hospitalized because of influenza complications.
- Flu seasons vary in severity, however some children die from flu each year. Since 2004, pediatric deaths reported to CDC during regular flu seasons ranged from 35 deaths (during 2011-2012) to 122 deaths (during 2010-2011). (During the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic, which lasted from April 15, 2009 to October 2, 2010, 348 pediatric deaths were reported to CDC.) More information about pediatric deaths since the 2004-2005 season is available at the [interactive pediatric death web application](#).

The single best way to protect your children from the flu is to get them vaccinated each year.

The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the season. For more information about this season’s vaccine selection, visit [Vaccine Virus Selection for the 2013-2014 Influenza Season](#).

CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a seasonal flu vaccine. Keep in mind that vaccination is especially important for certain people who are high risk or who are in close contact with high risk persons, including the following groups:

- Children younger than 5 years of age, and children of any age with a long-term health condition like asthma, diabetes or disorders of the brain or nervous system. These children are at higher risk of serious flu complications (like pneumonia) if they get the flu. For the complete list of those at high risk, visit [People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications](#).