

Simi Pediatric Partners

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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 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. Unfortunately some children die from flu each year. Since 2004-2005, flu-related deaths in children reported to CDC during regular flu seasons have ranged from 37 deaths to 171 deaths.

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 upcoming 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. This includes [children at high risk](#) for developing complications from influenza illness, and adults who are close contacts of those children.

Continued on next page

Some children are at especially high risk

1. **Children younger than 6 months old**

These children are too young to be vaccinated. The best way to protect them is to make sure people around them are vaccinated.

2. **Children aged 6 months up to their 5th birthday**

It is estimated that each year in the United States, there are more than 20,000 children younger than 5 years old who are hospitalized due to flu. Even children in this age group who are otherwise healthy are at risk simply because of their age. In addition, children 2 years of age up to their 5th birthday are more likely than healthy older children to be taken to a doctor, an urgent care center, or the emergency room because of flu. To protect their health, all children 6 months and older should be vaccinated against the flu each year. Vaccinating young children, their families, and other caregivers can also help protect them from getting sick.

3. **Children aged 6 months through 18 years with chronic health problems.**

Children should be vaccinated every flu season

Children should be vaccinated every flu season for the best protection against flu. For children who will need two doses of flu vaccine, the first dose should be given as early in the season as possible. For other children, it is good practice to get them vaccinated by the end of October, if possible. However, getting vaccinated later can still be protective, as long as flu viruses are circulating. While seasonal influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks between December and March. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against influenza virus infection, it is best that people get vaccinated so they are protected before influenza begins spreading in their community.

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/complications.htm#complications>