

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 cause people to get sick. The flu is spread easily by coughing, sneezing or talking. Every year many people get the flu. Some people can get very sick, and some may even die.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

People with the flu develop a high fever, headache, muscle aches, dry cough, and sore throat 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?

Flu vaccine is the single best way to protect children and adults from the flu. Flu vaccine is recommended every year for everyone 6 months of age and older.

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 because these babies are too young to receive 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.

Does the flu vaccine only come in a shot?

There are currently 2 types of vaccine available for school-aged children – a shot and a nasal-spray. In addition, some children may need 2 doses of vaccine. Healthcare 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. The vaccine can be given as soon as it becomes available (typically in 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 important to understand that the chance of being harmed from the flu itself 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-spray 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 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