

Flu Facts: *A Guide for Parents*

Loudoun County Public Schools

What is the flu?

Influenza (also known as flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu is different from a cold, and usually comes on suddenly. Each year flu viruses cause millions of illness, hundreds of thousands of hospital stays and tens of thousands of death in the United States.

How serious is flu?

While flu illness can vary from mild to severe, children often need medical care because of flu. Children younger than 5 years and children of any age with certain long-term health problems are at high risk of flu complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections. Some health problems that are known to make children more vulnerable to flu include asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system. The flu vaccine is safe and helps protect your child from the flu. Your doctor may also prescribe other medication that may also help your child. It is important to notify your child's doctor if your child experiences any symptoms that are included below.

How does flu spread?

Most experts believe flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when someone with the flu coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly inhaled into the lungs. A person can also get the flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.

What are flu symptoms?

Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, feeling tired and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). ***Some people with the flu will not get a fever.***

What if my child seems very sick?

Even healthy children can get very sick from flu. If your child is experiencing the following emergency warnings signs you should go to the emergency room or call 911.

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or not making as much urine as they normally do)
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with rash



 **Children should NOT return to school until they have been free of a fever for at least 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medication!**

Information provided by the CDC
For more information, visit
www.cdc.gov/flu
or call 800-CDC-INFO

How can I protect my child from the flu?



Get vaccinated

Influenza or “flu” can cause serious illness. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your family!

Cover your Cough or sneeze

Cover your mouth and nose with your sleeve or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Toss your used tissue in the waste basket and wash your hands!



Make sure your child gets rest and drinks plenty of fluids. If your child has flu symptoms, contact your health care provider as soon as possible.



Wash your hands

Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner!

**Fight
the
Flu**

It starts with you

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

If you touch surfaces with the flu virus, you can get the flu by touching your eyes, nose or mouth!



Stay home if You are sick and seek medical help!

Flu viruses go wherever you go when you are infected. Stay at home and check with your healthcare provider when needed!



For more information, visit the [LCPS Student Health Services Webpage!](#)