

## Children and the Influenza Vaccine (Flu shot)

### Should children get the flu shot?

All children can benefit from the flu shot. The flu virus spreads quickly and easily among children in schools and day cares. It spreads from child to child through coughing and sneezing, and through contact with contaminated objects such as toys and eating utensils. Vaccination of children will help to prevent the spread of the flu virus to others.

Flu virus infections are more common in children than in adults, and can make children feel very sick. Otitis media is a frequent complication of the flu infection in young children.

The flu infection is especially serious in children under 2 years of age and in children with other health risks. It can cause serious complications including pneumonia and bronchitis.

Children who have been treated for long periods of time with ASA (Aspirin) can develop Reye's Syndrome as a complication of the flu.

Children can shed the flu virus for up to seven days after they are infected (compared to a few days for adults), and can spread the infection to other children and their families. The flu vaccination of school-aged children has been shown to reduce respiratory illness in entire communities.

### Is the flu shot effective in children?

The flu shot is effective in children over the age of 6 months. Children under the age of 9 who have never received a flu shot will require two shots, one month apart, the first time they get the vaccine. This will improve the immunity a child develops. Only one shot is required from that year on.

In children, the flu shot is 77 to 91 percent effective in preventing the flu. (Immunization-Influenza Vaccine fact sheet, MOH, Public Health Division, 2004/05 season.)

### Do children get the same dose of vaccine as adults?

- Children over 9 years receive one 0.5 ml. dose.
- Children between 3 and 8 years of age receive two 0.5 ml. doses, one month apart the first year, then one shot each year thereafter.
- Children age 6 months to 36 months receive two 0.25 ml. doses, one month apart the first time they receive the vaccine, then one shot each year thereafter.

... over

**Kingston**  
221 Portsmouth Avenue  
Kingston, ON K7M 1V5  
Tel: 613-549-1232  
1-800-267-7875  
Fax: 613-549-7896

**Cloyne**  
P.O. Box 59  
14209 Highway 41  
Cloyne, ON K0H 1K0  
Tel: 613-336-8989  
Fax: 613-336-0522

**Napanee**  
41 Dundas Street  
Napanee, ON  
K7R 1Z5  
Tel: 613-354-3357  
Fax: 354-6267

**Sharbot Lake**  
P.O. Box 149  
1130 Elizabeth Street  
Sharbot Lake, ON K0H 2P0  
Tel: 613-279-2151  
Fax: 613-279-3997

**Are there side effects to the flu shot?**

Children under the age of 2 may develop a fever, but it is rarely severe. They may be given acetaminophen (Tylenol or Temptra) one-half hour before they get the shot and every four hours to help prevent fever from developing. Children between 2 and 12 years of age have virtually no reactions to the flu shot. Children over 12 may have the same type of side effects as adults, including a sore arm, fever and muscle aches for up to two days.

**Are there any children who should not get the flu shot?**

- Children who currently have any infection worse than a mild cold, especially if they have a fever, should wait until they are feeling better to get their flu shot.
- Children who have an anaphylactic reaction to eggs should not get a flu shot. Infants who have not yet had eggs introduced into their diet can safely receive the flu shot because anaphylaxis to eggs is very rare, while the complications of flu can be severe.
- Some flu shots contain neomycin; others do not. If a child has an anaphylactic reaction to neomycin, a flu vaccine is available that does not contain neomycin.

To lower the risk of getting the flu and its potential complications, consider having your child vaccinated this and every flu season.

For more information about the flu shot, you can call the Ministry of Health Influenza Vaccine Information Line at 1-866-FLU-'N YOU (1-866-358-6968) or KFL&A Public Health at 613-549-1232 or 1-800-267-7875 or visit our Web site at [www.kflapublichealth.ca](http://www.kflapublichealth.ca).