

Flu Facts

Dear Staff:

Every year, many child care workers, children, and family members get sick with influenza, also known as the flu. With the flu, people often get sick quickly or suddenly. Many of the signs that someone is sick with the flu include:

- high fever
- body aches
- dry cough
- headache
- chills
- sore throat
- runny nose
- extreme tiredness



Infants and children may also get upset stomachs and vomit (throw up). Children are more likely than adults to get sick with the flu and to spread the illness to others. Pregnant women are at risk for becoming very sick with the flu, too.

Many people who get the flu are sick for about a week, but then feel better. But flu can also be a serious illness. Each year, many people are hospitalized and some die as a result of the flu. Many of these people are elderly or very young.

The best way of protecting yourself from the flu is to get a flu vaccine every year.

Health experts recommend the following groups get a flu vaccine.

These groups are

- children six months to four years of age (they are at higher risk)
- children aged six months up to their 19th birthday
- pregnant women
- people 50 years of age and older
- people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- people who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu

Flu Facts, continued

There are two types of flu vaccine available for individuals:

- The **Flu shot** contains flu virus that are dead. It is given as a shot in the arm to people that are at least six months of age to adult. Two doses given at least one month apart are recommended for children six months to eight years who are receiving the flu shot for the first time.
- **FluMist™** is a nasal spray that contains weakened live flu virus. It is given to people that are at least two years and up to forty-nine years of age. Two doses given at least one month apart are recommended for children aged two to eight years who are receiving the flu shot for the first time. *This vaccine is **not** recommended for pregnant women or others with chronic health conditions.*

Here are important things to remember about flu vaccines:

- A new flu vaccine is needed every year, because the flu virus is always changing.
- Flu shots are safe and cannot cause the flu (the flu viruses in the shot are dead).
- FluMist™ is also safe approved for flu prevention (the mist is weakened live virus).
- Protection from the flu is not instant, it takes about two weeks after you get your flu vaccine to be protected from becoming sick with the flu.
- The flu vaccine does not protect you from all illnesses, and doesn't give 100 percent protection against the flu, but it can help keep you from getting seriously sick with the flu.
- If you have never had the flu, you still need to get a flu vaccine every year.
- Flu shots are very safe and are given to millions of people each year. Some people may be sore for one or two days where they had the shot or have very mild flu-like symptoms.
- Pregnant women need flu shots, too, so they won't get sick. **When a pregnant woman gets a flu shot, it can also help protect the newborn baby from the flu.** Flu shots do not harm the baby. It is safe for women who are breastfeeding. FluMist™ is **not** recommended for pregnant women.



Flu Facts, continued

Here are some simple ways to keep from getting sick with the flu (and other illnesses, too) or giving the flu to other people:



- **Wash your hands often with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds or as long as it takes to sing the Happy Birthday song twice).**
- **Cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve—not into your hands.**
- **If you cover your coughs and sneezes with tissue or your hands, be sure to wash your hands.**

- **Keep your hands away from your nose, eyes, and mouth.**
- **Teach and reward your children or the children you care for to wash their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes too!**
- **Keep sick children at home. Children who go to the child care center or school when they are sick can give the flu to other children.**
- **If you are sick, stay home from work, school, or other public places.**



For more information on the flu, go to www.publichealth.lacounty.gov.

Sincerely,