

Study: Few child care centers require flu vaccine for children, caregivers

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Only a quarter of child care centers require children to be vaccinated against the flu, and even fewer require vaccination of adult caregivers, according to a new study.

Researchers say these low numbers leave children at risk of a potentially deadly virus.

"When kids are in close proximity to each other in child care centers they spread infectious diseases very efficiently," lead author Timothy R. Shope, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, said in a news release.

His team from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Mississippi State University and the AAP conducted phone surveys with 518 directors of child care centers from 48 states and reported their findings in "Influenza Vaccine Requirements in United States Child Care Centers," (Shope TR, et al. *J Pediatric Infect Dis Soc.* Dec. 12, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpids/piz078>).

Only 24.5% of child care centers require children to be vaccinated against flu, and 13% require adult caregivers to be vaccinated, according to the study.

Requirement rates were higher in Connecticut, New Jersey, Ohio and Rhode Island, which mandate vaccination for child care attendance, but still only averaged 53%. Child care centers that required children to be vaccinated were more likely to require the same of adult caregivers.

Authors said more states should require vaccination of both children and caregivers.

"We can't depend on child care directors' experience or knowledge for implementing their own influenza vaccine requirements," Dr. Shope said. "If we're concerned with the public health of children and preventing influenza morbidity and mortality, we have to legislate the issue."

The AAP and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend everyone 6 months and older get vaccinated against the flu. The current season has just begun, but already six children have died.

Resources

- [AAP policy "Recommendations for Prevention and Control of Influenza in Children, 2019-2020"](#)
- [AAP policy "Medical Versus Nonmedical Immunization Exemptions for Child Care and School Attendance"](#)
- [Information from the CDC about flu](#)
- [Information for parents on flu vaccine from HealthyChildren.org](#)
- [AAP News stories on flu](#)
- [Pediatrics seasonal flu article collection](#)

