



3rd child dies of flu; new study shows vaccination prevents severe illness

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A third child has died of flu this season, while a new study shows vaccination is highly effective at preventing life-threatening illness among children.

“This study highlights that flu can cause serious illness in children, but flu vaccines can be lifesaving,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., M.P.H., said in a news release.

Flu activity fell slightly during the week ending Jan. 8 but remains elevated, according to the [CDC’s weekly flu report](#). Influenza A (H3N2) has been the most common flu virus detected.

The rate of flu hospitalization is higher than all last season when there was little flu circulation. However, hospitalizations are lower than the four seasons prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the CDC.

The CDC’s [most conservative estimates](#) are that at least 1.6 million people have gotten sick with flu, 16,000 have been hospitalized and 970 have died this season.

Young children are at elevated risk for flu complications and thousands are hospitalized each year.

In the 2019-’20 season, a record-breaking 199 children died, most of whom were unvaccinated. [The CDC and other experts have released a new study](#) looking at data on children with acute respiratory infections at 17 hospitals during that season.

The team calculated vaccine effectiveness of 75% against life-threatening influenza and 63% against critical influenza. Even when the circulating viruses were different than those in the vaccine, there was 47% effectiveness against critical influenza caused by mismatched A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses.

The AAP and CDC have stressed the importance of everyone 6 months and older getting vaccinated.

“It’s especially important that children get a flu vaccine in addition to their recommended COVID-19 vaccines this season,” Dr. Walensky said. “Flu season has started and currently flu vaccination is down in children, so now is the best time to get your child vaccinated, if you have not already.”

Resources

- [AAP policy *Recommendations for Prevention and Control of Influenza in Children, 2021-2022*](#)
- [Information from the CDC about flu](#)
- [Information for parents on flu vaccine from HealthyChildren.org](#)
- [Information on flu from the AAP *Red Book*](#)