

Don't chance it: Annual flu shot will cut children's risk of illness

September 28, 2016

Trisha Koriath, Staff Writer

Article type: [Parent Plus](#)

Topics: [Influenza](#), [Vaccine/Immunization](#)

Editor's note: Updated recommendations are available at <http://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/09/03/ppflu090318>.

Don't let flu sideline your family. Take the first opportunity to get everyone immunized.

Every parent has been there. You received email reminders about a flu shot clinic, but didn't get a chance to make an appointment. Now your child has come down with a fever over 101 degrees Fahrenheit, headache, chills, sore throat and dry cough. Off to the pediatrician you go.

All children over age 6 months should be immunized against influenza every year. The flu shot reduces the chance that your child will have to visit the doctor's office for treatment by 50% to 75%. The average case of flu can last a week or more. Children under age 5 years and those with chronic health conditions are at greater risk of problems from the flu.



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all children ages 6 months to 8 years receive two doses of influenza vaccine their first season, given four weeks apart. Thereafter, only one shot a year is needed. Children ages 9 years and older should receive one dose. It is safe for children with egg allergy to receive the influenza shot, according to the AAP.

Two types of shots are offered — a trivalent, which protects against three flu viruses, and a quadrivalent, which protects against four. The AAP does not prefer one over the other. The type of influenza virus in the shot changes each year depending on what type of viruses are circulating, according to the AAP.

Your child may have received the nasal spray vaccine (FluMist) in the past, but it is not an option this year. The nasal spray was found to be less effective at protecting people from certain influenza viruses.

To sidestep the flu in your family this season, follow these tips:

- Get a flu shot as soon as possible, preferably by the end of October. It is difficult to know when the virus will be at its peak in your community.
- Get a booster shot for children under age 9 years who are receiving the vaccine for the first time.
- If your child catches the flu, call your pediatrician to see whether he should receive an antiviral medicine.

For more information about preventing influenza, visit <http://bit.ly/2cNwrNV>.

