

Tammy Camp, M.D. – Flu shot/Pediatrics

Do children get very sick from the flu?

00:05

Many children get very ill from the flu. Every year there are children who end up being hospitalized with the flu. And we know that there are pediatric deaths that occur each year from influenza. It is really critical that we do vaccinate our children so that we can decrease those numbers of children that become very ill. This is especially important in our children who are high risk. Any kid who is less than five and particularly less than two years of age are at very high risk from influenza, disease and the complications of influenza. So it's very important that we vaccinate them. Other children who are at risk include people with asthma or other respiratory underlying respiratory diseases, cystic fibrosis, any child who has any kind of other underlying medical problem, children who have obesity are at increased risk for complications from influenza. So it's very important that we vaccinate particularly those children who are at risk, but definitely want to vaccinate every child to prevent flu disease.

At what age should a child get a flu shot?

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We want to vaccinate children beginning at six months of age. And so that's the first time that a child can get that vaccine, the very first time a child gets the flu vaccine, they require two vaccines. And so we give the first dose and then one month later, we give a second dose to provide them adequate protection.

What time of year is best for getting your child a flu shot?

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Ideally, the American Academy of Pediatrics really recommends that all children would have their flu vaccine by the end of October. So usually we get those vaccines in late August. And so we want to start vaccinating early September, and ideally by the end of October. But even if we don't meet that deadline, we want to vaccinate all the way up through the flu season, because any kind of vaccination can provide protection within about two weeks of receiving that vaccination.

Can a flu shot make a child sick?

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So definitely with the injectable vaccine, that is a killed vaccine. And so it is impossible for a child to get the flu from the vaccine. Some kids will have some symptoms from the vaccine. Most of the time those symptoms are mild, things like maybe a low grade fever, up to 100. Or some pain at the site of the vaccinations or soreness, there may be a little bit of redness around that site. But truly children don't get the flu from the flu vaccine.

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What are the different types of flu vaccines?

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So this year, we're really blessed that there are two options for that flu vaccine. You have the injectable vaccine, which is that killed vaccine. And then there is what we call the live attenuated vaccine. And that vaccine is a spray that can go up the nose. Not every child is eligible for that vaccine. But it's certainly something that a parent could ask for if their child were not wanting to have an injectable vaccine or a shot.

Is one more effective?

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They are both equally effective and need the American Academy of Pediatrics does not have a preference as to which one a child gets certainly just that every child would get a flu vaccine.

Why is it more important for children to be vaccinated this year?

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So there's a couple of reasons why we would really want children to be vaccinated for flu this year. One, we do have a vaccine to help prevent some of those symptoms and the significant morbidity and mortality that you can have from flu. And so it's very important for us to reduce the burden of flu disease in our community this year. Because as we come back COVID-19 There will also be children who are coming in sick with that those two diseases are very difficult to distinguish between. And so the idea that your child has had their flu vaccine makes it a little bit easier to think about what could be the other causes. The other reason it's so important as children are vectors, or they are part of how flu is so easily transmitted through the community. And so one of the ways that we can protect our hospitals and make sure that we have adequate hospital capacity to handle all the illness that occurs this season is to make sure that as many people are vaccinated for flu as can be.

What else is important to know?

04:48

So I think it's so important for parents to get their children vaccinated for flu, because it's also the way that we can protect them, we can protect other people that maybe are important to those children like grandparents. Whenever children get diseases, they are very likely to transmit those to people that they spend a lot of time with. And we know that children and grandparents like to interact with each other a lot. And so one of the things that a parent can do to protect the other people in their homes is to make sure that their children are vaccinated for flu.