



REPORT to PARENTS

RP 28:4

Flu Season Is Here

Because of the flu shot shortage, health experts are asking everyone who is healthy and between the ages of 2 and 64 years old to forego the vaccination this year. Here is some important information to help you deal with this year's flu season.

The Vaccine

- **Young toddlers should be vaccinated.**

Children between 6 months and 23 months—healthy or not—should still receive a flu vaccine, as should older adults (ages 65 and older), pregnant women, and healthcare workers.

- **Some school-age children still need the vaccine.** Children with chronic health problems still need to get a flu shot.

- **Follow your nose.** The intranasal vaccine (inhaled through the nose) may be available for children and adults, ages 5 to 49, who want protection from the flu but are not considered high risk. Pregnant women should not use this vaccine.

Prevention

- **Spread the word about spreading germs.**

Because germs are invisible, it's difficult for children to understand how dangerous a cough or sneeze can be. Be sure to stress to them the importance of washing their hands, using lots of soap and water, and scrubbing until there are bubbles—before meals and snacks and after coughing, sneezing, or using a tissue. Many brands of liquid hand soap come in fun designs, scents, or colors, and letting children pick their own can be a fun way to encourage hand washing.

- **Sing the birthday song.** Teach your child to wash their hands for as long as it takes to sing the entire "Happy Birthday" song.

- **There's a place to cough.** Certainly, children need to learn to always cover their mouths when they cough, but one way to prevent the spread of germs is to have them cough into their sleeves, not their hands.

- **Keep hands away from eyes, nose, and mouth.** Children sometimes absentmindedly put their fingers in their mouth or nose, or rub their eyes. Help your kids keep their hands away from "germy" areas—eyes, nose, and face.

- **Tissue talk.** "Used" tissues are full of germs. Teach your children to immediately put used tissues in the trash and then wash their hands.

Too Sick to Be in School?

- **Extreme fatigue or muscle aches.**

Children who can't keep their eyes open, even after having a normal night's sleep, may be coming down with something. Add an "achy" feeling and loss of appetite, and it's likely that the flu is on the way. If your child is feeling too ill to stay awake in class, consider having him or her stay home. At the very least, alert the teacher and make sure someone is available in case he or she needs to come home. Before returning to school, your child needs to have gone without a fever or vomiting for at least 24 hours.

- **Get the school's help with make-up work.** Talk to the teacher to find out the best way for your child to make up missed work. Often, a child not quite well enough to return to class can complete assignments at home, making the workload a lot easier to manage once he or she is back in school.

Children who are feverish, nauseated, or bone-tired can't learn well and can spread their illness to others, so keep them home. Be sure that if they do miss school, it is for a good reason, and have them make up the work as soon as possible.

