

Pointers For Parents

Beat Winter Ills by Getting Your Child a Flu Vaccine

(NAPSA)—Any parent will tell you that running a household is tough. With shuttling the kids from school, to play dates and to sporting activities, it is no wonder that some forget to get a flu shot for their children. But once influenza hits your home, you might wish you had taken the time to get your child vaccinated. “When our son, Tim, was a toddler, the flu went through our house, and he was in the hospital for three days,” says his mother, Lyn, of Alexandria, VA. “Ever since then, we all get the flu shot every year.”

Most of us know what it's like to miss work to stay home and take care of a sick, miserable child. You know the hallmarks of flu—high fever, coughing, and aches and pains all over. But maybe you do not know that flu can cause serious problems, especially in children under two years of age and in all children with health conditions such as asthma and diabetes. Recent studies have shown that kids younger than two, even if they are healthy, are more likely than older ones to end up in the hospital if they get the flu. In some cases they can even die. Each year, on average, 178 children die from complications of the flu, and about one child in every 1,000 is hospitalized.

In 2004, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advised that all children from 6 to 23 months of age and people in close contact with them get a flu shot each year. To protect infants younger than 6



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months old, their parents and other family members should get vaccinated.

CDC recommends that all children (and adults) get a flu vaccine in the fall, before flu season really gets under way. If you did not get your flu vaccine last year due to shortages, do not hesitate to get one this year. Even if you were vaccinated last year, it is important to get a flu shot annually, since there is a new flu vaccine each year.

Flu shots are safe and effective and cannot cause the flu. If you do not know when or where to get a shot, ask your doctor or call your local health department. You can also find a clinic near you by going to the Web site, www.flucliniclocator.org and entering your zip code.

To learn more, call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/flu.