

Protecting Children's Health

Flu-Fighting Facts About Kids In Child Care Centers

(NAPSA)—More parents are learning just how important it is for children to get an annual flu vaccination—and that it's especially important for children who spend time in child care centers.

Some parents don't realize how serious the flu can be—even for healthy children. Over the past four flu seasons more than 300 children have died from influenza. And more than 20,000 children under the age of 5 are hospitalized due to the flu each year.

To help educate the public about the importance of vaccinations, the National Association of Child Care Professionals (NACCP) has joined together with Families Fighting Flu (FFF) to launch a nationwide campaign—Fighting Flu in Child Care Settings: Building Blocks to Increase Influenza Awareness.

As part of the program, child care center directors will individually track flu vaccinations for children within their centers, thus encouraging healthy preventive practices, starting at a young age. Such practices are expected to result in a healthier child care center environment and, potentially, a healthier community.

"Vaccinating children against the flu is the single best way to protect them and their families from the virus," said Richard Kanowitz, FFF president. Kanowitz's 4-year-old daughter, Amanda, died suddenly in March 2004 from influenza. "Unfortunately, many parents underestimate the seriousness of the flu."

Influenza, or "the flu," is a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract (nose, throat and lungs). The flu virus tends to spread from November to April, with most cases occurring between December and March.

The flu is often confused with



Catching the flu can be serious. Children who spend time in child care centers should be vaccinated against the flu.

the common cold, but flu symptoms tend to develop quickly and are usually more severe than the typical sneezing and congestion associated with a cold. Influenza is often accompanied with fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are also common symptoms in children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children from 6 months up to age 5 get vaccinated against the flu every year. In addition, children with certain medical conditions, household contacts (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) and out-of-home caregivers of children age 0 up to age 5 should also get vaccinated against the flu every year.

This campaign is made possible by an educational grant from sanofi pasteur.

For more information, visit www.naccp.org or www.familiesfightingflu.org.