

Health Bulletin



Flu's Gonna Lose—Join The Winning Side!

(NAPSA)—Many American parents have discovered that keeping their children safe from the flu is both easier and more important than they realized.

Studies show that otherwise healthy but unvaccinated daycare and school-age children are prime targets for influenza, commonly called “the flu.”

Once infected, children shed more of the influenza viruses than do infected adults, and they do so for a longer time. That's why they're so often at the center of an outbreak in the family or the community.

A staggering 5 to 20 percent of the U.S. population gets the flu each year. More than 200,000 people end up hospitalized due to flu complications, and about 36,000 people die each year from influenza.

“We lost our little girl, Emily, to the flu, and unfortunately, she wasn't vaccinated. It's that simple and that awful,” says Families Fighting Flu spokesperson Joe Lastinger.

Through its Flu's Gonna Lose campaign, Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases (PKIDs) encourages everyone to avoid the potentially severe consequences of influenza by learning what can be done to prevent infection.

These are some simple steps to take to keep as healthy as possible during flu season:

- Get vaccinated. Every year, a new vaccine is developed to combat that year's particular virus, so annual immunization is necessary.

- Wash hands. Frequent hand-washing keeps lots of germs out, including influenza. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer.

- Stay home if you don't feel well. Keep germs from spreading.

- Use tissues to block a



When children become infected with the flu, unvaccinated household members may follow suit, leading to missed school, missed work, even hospitalization.

sneeze or cough. If no tissues are available, use your sleeve. This helps prevent the spread of germs. Don't forget to wash your hands afterward, even if using a tissue.

Preschoolers can be contagious before they show symptoms of infection, and they're contagious longer than adults. Because this age group gets so many upper respiratory infections a year, it's hard to tell if the infection is influenza; so, with your health care provider's supervision, err on the side of caution and vaccinate those 6 months of age and older.

Dr. Jon Abramson, former chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Infectious Diseases, says: “Flu is a serious disease, and prevention through vaccination provides the best chance for avoiding the disease altogether.”

Influenza is a largely preventable disease. Vaccination protects not only the individual, but also the youngest and oldest members of the community—those most at risk not only for infection, but for the complications that can arise from infection.

You can learn more online at www.pkids.org.