

# Influenza Handouts – Make copies and give them to your patients.

**1 Don't take chances with your family's health – make sure you all get vaccinated against influenza every year!**

Here's how influenza can hurt your family...

**Influenza can make you, your children, or your parents really sick.**

**Influenza spreads easily from person to person.**

**Influenza and its complications can be so serious that they can put you, your children, or your parents in the hospital – or lead to death.**

**Influenza can be a very serious disease for you, your child, and friends – but you can all be protected by getting vaccinated.**

**Get vaccinated every year! Get your child vaccinated every year! Be sure your parent is vaccinated every year!**

**2 Protect yourself from influenza... Get vaccinated!**

**What is influenza?**

Influenza (flu) is a serious disease caused by a virus. Influenza can make you feel miserable! Fever, cough, shaking chills, body aches, and extreme weakness are common symptoms.

**How do you catch it?**

You can catch influenza from people who cough, sneeze, or even just talk around you. It is very contagious.

**Is it serious?**

Yes! Tragically, every year infants, children, teens, and adults die from influenza.

Influenza is very unpredictable. No one knows how deadly influenza will be each year. Even if you have a mild case of influenza, you can still pass the virus on to your friends, family, and coworkers who could get very sick or even die.

**Get your influenza vaccination every year!**

**3 Influenza is a serious disease... Make sure your child is protected!**

**What is influenza?**

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**How do you catch influenza?**

Your child can catch influenza from people who cough, sneeze, or even just talk around him or her. It is very contagious.

**Is influenza serious?**

Yes. Tragically, every year infants, children, teens, and adults die from influenza.

Influenza is dangerous for children as well as for people of all ages. Children younger than 2 years of age are at particular risk for hospitalization due to complications.

**Get your child's influenza vaccine up to date each year!**

**4 Cocooning protects babies**

**Everyone in a baby's life needs to get vaccinated against whooping cough and flu!**

**What is cocooning?**

Babies younger than 6 months old are most likely to develop certain infectious diseases than older children. Cocooning is a way to protect babies from catching diseases from the people around them – people like their parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, child-care providers, babysitters, and healthcare providers. Once these people are vaccinated, they are less likely to spread these contagious diseases to the baby. They surround the baby with a cocoon of protection against disease until he or she is old enough to get all the doses of vaccine needed to be fully protected.

**Why is cocooning important?**

Babies less than 6 months old are too young to have received all the doses of vaccine that are needed to protect them from whooping cough (pertussis), flu (influenza), and other dangerous diseases. To be fully protected, babies need to get all the vaccine doses in a series – not just the first dose.

Unvaccinated adults and family members, including parents, are often the ones who unknowingly spread dangerous diseases to babies.

Currently, towns and cities across the nation have had whooping cough outbreaks. Influenza outbreaks happen every year.

**How can we protect babies?**

Everyone has the opportunity to protect babies by getting vaccinated themselves. Cocooning is an easy and effective way that people can work together to prevent the spread of whooping cough and flu to babies.

**How can we protect babies against whooping cough?**

- All family members should be vaccinated on schedule with DTaP (the childhood whooping cough vaccine).
- All teenagers and adults need a one-time dose of Tdap vaccine (the teen and adult whooping cough vaccine).
- Pregnant women should receive a Tdap vaccination in each pregnancy, preferably during the 3rd trimester. This will protect the pregnant woman as well as her baby!

**How can we protect babies against flu?**

Everyone ages 6 months and older needs to receive flu vaccine every year.

**Information from trusted sources:**

- Whooping Cough: <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/>
- Whooping Cough: [http://www.mass.gov/ehp/divisions/ehp/division\\_of\\_infectious\\_disease\\_control\\_and\\_prevention/prevention\\_services/whooping\\_cough/](http://www.mass.gov/ehp/divisions/ehp/division_of_infectious_disease_control_and_prevention/prevention_services/whooping_cough/)
- Vaccine Educational Materials for Parents: [http://www.mass.gov/ehp/divisions/ehp/division\\_of\\_infectious\\_disease\\_control\\_and\\_prevention/prevention\\_services/whooping\\_cough/](http://www.mass.gov/ehp/divisions/ehp/division_of_infectious_disease_control_and_prevention/prevention_services/whooping_cough/)
- Vaccine Information Website: [www.vaccineinformation.org/](http://www.vaccineinformation.org/)
- Cocooning and Tdap Vaccination Web Section: [www.immunize.org/cocooning/](http://www.immunize.org/cocooning/)

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**5 Keep your kids safe – get them vaccinated every fall or winter!**

**Influenza more serious risks?**

Influenza vaccine may save your child's life.

**What is influenza?**

Influenza, or "flu," is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs. It can easily spread from person to person.

**What types of vaccine are available for children?**

- Influenza shots can be given to children 6 months and older.
- The nasal-spray influenza vaccine can be given to healthy children 2 years and older. It can provide better protection in healthy children ages 3 through 5 years and is preferred for children of this age if it is available in the office or clinic; however, if your clinic doesn't have the vaccine, your child should get the influenza shot.
- Children younger than 3 years who have had influenza in the past year – or any child with chronic health problems – should get the injectable vaccine (a shot), not the nasal-spray vaccine.
- Children younger than 3 years old who are getting influenza vaccine for the first time need two doses, separated by 4 weeks.

**How else can I protect my child?**

- Every year, get an influenza vaccination yourself!
- Urge your child's close contacts to get vaccinated, too. This is extremely important if your child is younger than 3 or if he or she has a chronic health problem such as asthma or diabetes. Because children younger than 6 months can't be vaccinated, they rely on those around them to get vaccinated.
- Wash your hands often and cover your coughs and sneezes. It's best to use a tissue and quickly throw it away. If you don't have a tissue, you should cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands. This will prevent the spread of germs.
- Fill your children to:
  - Stay away from people who are sick.
  - Wash their hands often.
  - Keep their hands away from their face, and
  - Cover coughs and sneezes to protect others.

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**6 Influenza: Questions and Answers**

**Information about the disease and vaccines**

**What causes influenza?**

Viruses cause influenza. There are two basic types, A and B, which can cause clinical illness in humans. Their genetic material differs from each other. Influenza A can cause moderate to severe illness in all age groups and infects humans and other animals. Influenza B causes mild disease and affects only humans, primarily children.

Serotypes of the type A influenza virus are identified by two antigens (proteins) involved in the immune response on the surface of the virus. These antigens can change, or mutate, over time. When a "shift" (major change) occurs in a virus's surface antigens, a new and epidemic influenza virus is born and an epidemic is likely among the unvaccinated population. This happened when the novel H1N1 influenza virus appeared in March of 2009 and led to a major pandemic, lasting until the summer of 2010.

**How does influenza spread?**

Influenza is transmitted through the air from the respiratory tract of an infected person. It can also be transmitted by direct contact with respiratory droplets.

**How long does it take to develop symptoms of influenza after being exposed?**

The incubation period of influenza is usually two days but can range from one to four days.

**What are the symptoms of influenza?**

Typical influenza disease is characterized by abrupt onset of fever, aching muscles, sore throat, and non-productive cough. Additional symptoms may include runny nose, headache, a burning sensation in the chest, and eye pain and tearing in the light. Typical influenza disease does not occur in early infected persons. Someone who has been previously exposed to similar virus strains (through natural infection or vaccination) is less likely to develop serious clinical illness.

**How serious is influenza?**

Although many people think of influenza as the "flu" or just a common cold, it is really a specific and serious respiratory disease that can result in hospitalization and death. In the United States, the number of influenza-associated deaths has increased since 1990. This increase is due in part to the substantial increase in the number of people age 65 years and older.

**Who are at increased risk for death from influenza complications?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that from the 1976-77 influenza season to the 2006-07 season, influenza-associated deaths ranged from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 each year. It is estimated that approximately 45–80 million people became ill with 2009 pandemic H1N1 in the U.S. from April 2009 to April 2010.

Influenza disease can occur among people of all ages; however, the risks for complications, hospitalizations, and deaths are higher among people age 65 years or older, young children, and people of any age who have certain medical conditions. Case reports and epidemiologic studies also indicate that pregnancy can increase the risk for serious medical complications from influenza.

In nursing homes, up to 60% of residents may become infected, with up to a 20% mortality rate in the infected. Risk for influenza-associated death is highest among the oldest of the elderly: people age 85 years and older are 18 times more likely to die from an influenza-associated illness than people age 65–84 years.

Hospitalization from influenza-related complications is also high among children age 24 months and younger – comparable to rates for people age 65 and older. There were 123 laboratory-confirmed influenza-related pediatric deaths reported during the 2003-04 influenza season. In the following four influenza seasons, the annual number of pediatric deaths reported to CDC ranged from 47 during the 2004-05 season to 88 during the 2007-08 season. During 2009-2010, over 300 deaths in children due to 2009 H1N1 influenza were reported, and over 1,000 deaths were estimated to have occurred in children.

**How is a pandemic different from an epidemic of influenza?**

Occasionally, major influenza epidemics expand to a pandemic. The first recording of such an event was in 1580, and at least seven international pandemics have occurred in the 20th century and interwar periods. The "Spanish flu" epidemic of 1918-1919 caused an estimated 21 million deaths worldwide, including more than 500,000 Americans. One

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For 8½ x 11" copies of the pieces above, visit IAC's website: [www.immunize.org/handouts/influenza-vaccines.asp](http://www.immunize.org/handouts/influenza-vaccines.asp)

- 1 Don't take chances with your family's health – make sure you all get vaccinated against influenza! [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4069.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4069.pdf)
- 2 Protect yourself from influenza...Get vaccinated! [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4408.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4408.pdf)  
SPANISH: [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4408-01.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4408-01.pdf)
- 3 Influenza is a serious disease...make sure your child is protected! [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4312.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4312.pdf)  
SPANISH: [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4312-01.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4312-01.pdf)

- 4 Cocooning protects babies [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4039.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4039.pdf)  
SPANISH: [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4039-01.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4039-01.pdf)
- 5 Keep your kids safe – get them vaccinated every fall or winter! [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4070.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4070.pdf)  
SPANISH: [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4070-01.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4070-01.pdf)  
ARABIC: [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4070-20.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4070-20.pdf)  
CHINESE: [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4070-08.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4070-08.pdf)
- 6 Influenza: Questions and answers [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4208.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4208.pdf)
- 7 Seek emergency medical care if you or a family member shows the signs below [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4073.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4073.pdf)

**7 Seek emergency medical care if you or family member shows the signs below**

**It's a fact – every year, people of all ages in the U.S. die from influenza and its complications.**

**Emergency warning signs for children or teens with influenza**

Any child or teen who shows the following emergency warning signs needs urgent medical attention – take them to an emergency room or call 9-1-1.

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not urinating in no less than 8 hours when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Influenza-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

**Emergency warning signs for adults with influenza**

Any adult who shows the following emergency warning signs needs urgent medical attention – take them to an emergency room or call 9-1-1.

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Sudden dizziness
- Influenza-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Keep this handy! Post it on your refrigerator or another place where it will be easy to find!

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