

# INFLUENZA IN YOUNG CHILDREN



Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes, the lungs. It can cause anything from mild symptoms to severe illness, and in some cases, can be life-threatening. One of the best ways to protect your child from the flu is by ensuring they receive the flu vaccine every year.

## SYMPTOMS TO WATCH FOR

Children often feel worst during the first 2 or 3 days of the illness.

### Common symptoms include:

- A sudden high-grade fever (over 39°C), often with chills and shivering
- Severe headaches and body aches
- A worsening dry cough
- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Vomiting and diarrhoea

Babies with flu tend to be sicker, fussier and seem more uncomfortable and unhappy than when they have a common cold.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD GETS THE FLU

There's no cure for the flu, but early intervention is key. Speak to a healthcare professional as soon as you notice symptoms. As children are more likely to have serious complications with flu, it is important to start treating their symptoms early.

Ask your healthcare provider about over-the-counter medicine for children that can lower fever and ease aches. Never give aspirin to children or teenagers, as it can increase their risk of Reye's syndrome – a rare disorder that can harm their liver or cause brain damage. Make sure your child gets lots of rest in bed and drinks plenty of fluids.

It is especially important to consult a medical professional if your child is younger than 5 years or has a chronic health condition like asthma or other lung disease, a heart condition, or diabetes.



## WHEN TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL

It is important to seek immediate medical assistance should your child show any of the following signs:

- **Trouble breathing that doesn't get better after clearing their nose, or if they're breathing rapidly, have chest pain, or you see their ribs pulling in with each breath**
- **A very high fever (40°C or more), especially if accompanied by a rash**
- **Skin turning blue or grey**
- **Seem sicker than in any previous episode of illness or don't respond like normal e.g. if they don't cry when expected or make good eye contact with you, or if they're listless or lethargic**
- **Not drinking fluids well, continuing to vomit frequently, showing signs of dehydration, such as absence of tears, having dry nappies, or being cranky and low on energy**
- **Persistent vomiting that doesn't improve**
- **Seizures**

## PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE



The annual flu vaccine is one of the most effective ways to protect your child and prevent the spread of the virus in your family and community. It is safe, quick and recommended for children over the age of six months.

By staying informed and acting early, you can help protect your child from flu complications and support a healthy recovery if they do become ill.