



Flu Season

The influenza or flu season is fast approaching and as a parent, you need to be ready! There are several ways to prevent the flu from infecting your child – good hand washing habits, covering your mouth when coughing, avoiding others who are sick, getting plenty of sleep and eating a healthy diet, but the most important prevention is vaccinating your child BEFORE they become infected with the virus.

The flu is caused by a virus called the influenza virus. It is spread from person to person by sneezing, coughing, runny noses wiped on hands and then on toys, and close contact. School environments are the perfect place to spread the virus!

Symptoms include fever (usually very high), headache, body aches and pains, extreme tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny nose and sometimes stomach symptoms (nausea, vomiting or diarrhea). These symptoms can last for 7-10 days and in some cases, if you are a young child, an elderly person or if you have a medical condition like asthma or heart disease, you might go on to develop other complications which require hospitalization. The flu can be a very serious illness!

We doctors have no medicines that can stop the flu. Antibiotics will not work to kill the virus. The best treatment is to have your child vaccinated BEFORE they become infected with the flu. This allows your child's body to naturally fight the virus with their own immune system.

The influenza vaccine can be given safely to any child over 6 months of age. The vaccine is available as a shot (for 6 months and above) or as an intranasal spray (only for 5 years and older). The best time to get the vaccine is October or November before the season is peaking. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends the influenza vaccine for all children ages 6 months to 59 months (5 years) and for all children with pre-existing medical conditions (like asthma or heart disease). In my practice, as long as there is no shortage of the vaccine, I am recommending that all children and adolescents get vaccinated.

Call your child's doctor to find out when the vaccine will be available and make an appointment today! Now is the right time for action to keep your child healthy this fall and winter season! Good luck at your next meal!