

How important is a flu shot?

In short, very. Especially this year.

Don't risk it—your child should get a flu shot every year.

Doctors throughout our Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centers are used to hearing the reasons why parents choose not to get a flu vaccine. However, there are many reasons to vaccinate your child.

Andi Shane, MD, MPH, System Medical Director, Infectious Diseases at Children's says, "Flu season is unpredictable, especially this year as we continue to face **COVID-19**. The best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu is for everyone 6 months and older to get a seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available."

6 reasons why all children (older than 6 months) should get a yearly flu vaccine:

Flu shots:

1. Reduce your child's chance of getting the flu.

- The flu vaccine prevents millions of illnesses each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the flu vaccine prevented 5.3 million influenza illnesses during the **2016-2017 flu season**.

2. Help protect you and your family—especially during COVID-19.

- Since some flu symptoms are similar to symptoms of **COVID-19**, preventing a flu infection by getting your annual flu shot could reduce confusion or concerns about possible COVID-19 infection in your family. Plus, it helps reduce the risk of contracting both viruses.

3. Reduce the length and severity of a flu infection.

- Several studies have shown that a flu vaccination reduces the severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still get sick. For example, a **2014 study** found that the flu vaccine reduced children's risk of flu-related Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) admissions by 74% during the 2010-2012 flu seasons.

4. Protect pregnant mothers and infants in the family.

- A **2018 study** showed that getting a flu shot reduced a pregnant woman's risk of being hospitalized with the flu by close to half.
- Not only does getting a flu vaccine during pregnancy protect expecting mothers, if given during pregnancy it helps to protect the baby from flu infection for the first 6 months after birth, when babies are too young to be vaccinated.

5. Protect other kids and adults who have chronic medical conditions or have compromised immune systems.

- Flu vaccination reduces everyone's risk of becoming seriously ill, but this is especially important for kids who have chronic conditions, like asthma or diabetes. Vaccination also helps protect children who have compromised immune systems.

6. Are safe and protect children.

- You cannot get flu from the flu shot.

Getting your family vaccinated against the flu is the best way to keep your child healthy during flu season.