

## **American Academy of Pediatrics “What’s the Latest With the Flu” Message for Caregivers/Teachers**

### **2015-2016 Influenza Season**

The 2015-2016 influenza season (flu) is here. As you know, influenza infection can be serious, resulting in hospitalization or death of some children every year. Influenza immunization is the best strategy to reduce infection and spread. Therefore, it’s critically important for everyone to get vaccinated for seasonal influenza now. This important approach puts the health and safety of everyone in the child care setting first.

Annual influenza vaccine is recommended for all people 6 months of age and older. The best way to protect young children from getting infected is for all family members and people who take care of the child to get immunized. This is called "cocooning", and it is especially important for adults who care for infants younger than 6 months, because these children are too young to get vaccinated.

Pregnant caregivers are at higher risk of severe illness from influenza. Flu shots may be given to pregnant women at any time during pregnancy. The vaccine will protect expecting mothers and their unborn babies, and will help protect their newborn baby in the first few months of life.

### **This Season’s Flu Vaccine**

The flu vaccine includes either 3 strains (trivalent) or 4 strains (quadrivalent). These are the strains that are anticipated to circulate around the US this flu season.

The trivalent vaccine protects against 1 strain from last year and 2 new strains. These are:

- Influenza A (H1N1)
- Influenza A (H3N2)
- Influenza B

The quadrivalent vaccine protects against the 3 strains from the trivalent vaccine and adds a different influenza B strain (the same as last season). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend one vaccine over another this season. Just be sure everyone gets immunized!

### **Prepare Ahead to Prevent the Spread of Germs**

Once flu starts circulating, it can be challenging to keep germs from spreading. While you can catch the flu any time of the year, the virus is most common in the US between October and May and usually peaks around January, February, and March. It is also hard to know whether children or caregivers actually have the flu. Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others.

Policies in your child care center can limit the spread of the influenza virus and should focus on hand washing; cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting surfaces and toys; and

excluding children and caregivers who are sick. Any child with respiratory symptoms (cough, runny nose, or sore throat) and fever should be excluded from their child care program. The child can return after the fever has resolved (without the use of fever-reducing medicine), the child is able to participate in normal activities, and staff can care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the other children in the group.

### **Take Steps NOW to Help Your Program Prepare**

1. Encourage all staff, children, and parents to get the flu vaccine now. Everyone needs a flu vaccine each year!
2. Get on the list to receive details about the AAP influenza webinar to be scheduled for November 2015. E-mail [DisasterReady@aap.org](mailto:DisasterReady@aap.org) for information and a calendar appointment.
3. Complete the free AAP/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention online course "Influenza Prevention & Control: Strategies for Early Education & Child Care Providers".
4. Help families and community leaders understand the important roles they play in reducing the spread of flu. Review the new handout "Influenza Prevention and Control: Strategies for Early Education and Child Care Programs" and plan to distribute a customized letter to parents about influenza prevention and control practices in your program.
5. Examine and revise your program's written plan for seasonal flu.
6. Invite a pediatrician or child care health consultant to provide influenza prevention education to your staff.
7. Use posters and handouts to educate caregivers and staff about proper hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.
8. Update family contact information and child records, so parents can be reached quickly if they need to pick up their sick child.

### **Resources**

- [AAP Preparing Child Care Programs for Pandemic and Seasonal Influenza](#)
- [AAP Preventing the Flu: Resources for Parents and Child Care Providers](#)
- [AAP Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards](#)
- [AAP Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide](#)
- [CDC Fact Sheet No More Excuses: You Need a Flu Vaccine!](#)
- [CDC Flu Information – Free Print Materials](#)
- [Head Start Emergency Preparedness Manual: 2015 Edition](#)
  - Public Health Emergencies Chapter on Page 27
  - Influenza Prevention and Control Appendix on Page 65
- [Families Fighting Flu Web Site](#)
- [Prevent Childhood Influenza Web Site](#)