What are the symptoms of flu?

The classic symptoms of flu in children are a little different than adult symptoms. Adults can have a fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, and body aches. Children have a fever and cough. Preschool-age children may not have classic symptoms and can have vomiting and diarrhea, which adults don’t have. Not everyone who gets the flu will have a fever or sore throat, though.

When are people most likely to get flu? How is it spread?

We see flu in our part of the world mostly in the winter, although there are random cases at other time of the year. Flu can hit anyone. Most experts think flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk.

There’s no cure for the flu; how are symptoms treated?

If you feel terrible and see the doctor, you can be tested and get medicine that may shorten the time you have the flu and make the symptoms milder. The five-day course of flu medicine has to be started within the first two days of showing flu symptoms.

How do we best prevent flu from spreading?

We can reduce risk with hand washing, but the best protection is vaccination. Flu vaccine is safe. A health care provider can help you figure out which vaccine is right for you. Getting vaccinated by October of every year is the best way to stop flu.

Children younger than 6 months of age cannot get a flu vaccine, so protecting them is very important. Family members of and caregivers to children of this age should take special measures to keep infants healthy and safe from flu.

I recommend that everyone age 6 months and older get an appropriate flu vaccine every year. The CDC recommends that healthy children ages 2 through 8 get the live vaccine (nasal mist), and in general, healthy people ages 2 through 49 can get the live vaccine, if it’s available. The live virus is weakened, and it’s sprayed into the nose. It gives protection at the site where flu may strike. People who can’t have a live vaccine for some reason (such as asthma or heart disease) can have the inactivated vaccine (a shot). The inactivated vaccine can be used for all ages.

Describe some of your current flu research.

We have a CDC-funded study to understand what’s happening with the immune system as children switch from having the activated virus to the inactivated. It’ll help us understand the preferences between one vaccine and another. The study will also help create national vaccine policies for children.

We regularly study flu in primary care centers. We look at whether people with flu symptoms received a vaccine and how well the vaccine worked. We share this information with the CDC, who in turn shares it with the World Health Organization, which makes the selections for the flu strains we vaccinate against each year.
What would you say to people concerned about the flu vaccine?

I’m vaccinated, and so are my wife and children. You want to be vaccinated for yourself and also to protect others who may be more at risk. If you’re the parent of an infant, you want to get vaccinated so that you don’t bring illness to your child, who has the potential to suffer from more serious complications because of age.

I’d also tell them to visit http://www.cdc.gov/flu/ for more information.

REGISTRY ENROLLMENT REACHES A MILESTONE

Enrollment in the University of Pittsburgh/UPMC Research Participant Registry has reached 76,000 active participants, including more than 18,000 children. Thank you for being part of the Registry!

Volunteers Needed for Studies

University of Pittsburgh PRO12080401:
Exercise Programs for Overweight Adolescents Ages 12-17

Are you the parent of an overweight child between the ages of 12-17 years old? If so, your child may be eligible for an exercise training study to examine health benefits of physical activity. Study involves personal training for one hour, three times a week, for six months at no cost. Compensation provided.

University of Pittsburgh PRO12010502B:
Child Brain Development Study—Healthy Children Ages 4-12

Are you the parent of a healthy child between the ages of 4-12? If so, your child may be eligible to participate in a study investigating the developing child brain. Participants must be free of mental and physical disorders and must be able to complete an MRI scan. Flexible hours. Compensation is provided.

University of Pittsburgh PRO08050295: Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Registry

This registry differs from a clinical trial (study) in that patients will be followed under normal practice conditions; no other tests are required. If your child has been diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, Crohn’s disease, or indeterminate colitis, age 0-16 years old, s/he may be eligible to participate. Participants over 9 years old will complete a quality-of-life questionnaire every three months.

WINTER WORD SEARCH