

Megan Dinh, M.D.  
Joseph Dorfman, M.D.  
William Giasi, M.D.  
Robert F. Helmrich, M.D.  
Payal Hemrajani, M.D.  
Valerie Kullmann, M.D.  
Bert Mandelbaum, M.D.  
Rebecca Marshall, M.D.  
Joelle McConlogue, M.D.  
Adam Naddelman, M.D.  
D. Shawn Pierson, M.D.  
J. Dean Pierson, M.D.  
Gerald M. Raymond, M.D.  
Allen J. Schneider, M. D.  
Priya Stephen, M.D.

## **Princeton Nassau Pediatrics, P. A.**

Princeton Shopping Center  
301 North Harrison Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540  
609-924-5510

196 Princeton Hightstown Road, West Windsor, New Jersey 08540  
609-799-5335

### **Influenza (Flu) – Seasonal Type**

#### **Definition**

Influenza is a viral infection of the nose, throat, windpipe, and bronchi. The main symptoms are a cough, sore throat and runny nose. Usually there's more muscle pain, headache, fever, and chills than seen with colds.

#### **Cause**

Flu is caused by influenza viruses. Flu viruses change yearly, which is why people can get the flu every year. It spreads rapidly because the incubation period is only 2 days.

#### **Diagnosis: How to know that your child has Influenza**

If influenza is widespread in your community and your child has flu symptoms, then he or she probably has flu. You don't need to get any special tests. You don't need to call or see your child's doctor, unless your child develops a possible complication of the flu (see the "Call your child's doctor" section).

#### **How to Treat Seasonal Flu**

The treatment of flu depends on your child's main symptoms and is no different from the treatment for other viral respiratory infections. Bed rest is not necessary. Antibiotics are not helpful.

##### **1. Fever or aches**

Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever over 102°F (39°C) or for any pain. Children and adolescents who have influenza should never take aspirin.

##### **2. Cough**

For children over age 6, give cough drops. If your child is over 1 year of age, give honey (1/2 to 1 teaspoon as needed). Never give honey to babies. If honey is not available, you can use corn syrup. Drugstore cough medicines are not as helpful as honey. Also, they are not approved for children under 4 years old.

##### **3. Sore throat**

Tylenol or ibuprofen is very helpful for throat pain. Children over 6 years old can suck on hard candy. Children over 1 year old can sip warm chicken broth.

#### **4. Stuffy or blocked nose**

Saline (or warm-water) nose drops followed by suction (or nose blowing) will open most blocked noses. Use nasal washes whenever your child can't breathe through the nose. You can buy saline spray without a prescription. Saline nose drops can also be made by adding 1/2 teaspoon (2 ml) of table salt to 1 cup (8 oz or 240 ml) of warm water.

#### **5. Antiviral medicine (such as Tamiflu)**

The American Academy of Pediatrics and CDC recommend prescription antiviral medicines be used for all HIGH-RISK children (see #6) who come down with flu. Most HEALTHY children with influenza do not need antiviral medicine unless they develop serious symptoms (such as pneumonia). Antiviral medicines must be started within 48 hours of the start of influenza symptoms to have an effect. They usually reduce the time your child is sick by 1 or 2 days. They improve the symptoms but do not cure the disease. If you have other questions about antiviral medicine, talk with your healthcare provider.

#### **6. HIGH-RISK children**

Children are considered high-risk for complications if they have any of the following conditions: lung disease (excluding stable, well controlled asthma), heart disease (such as a congenital heart disease), diabetes, sickle cell disease, kidney disease, cancer or weak immune system conditions, diseases requiring long-term aspirin therapy, pregnant teens or healthy children less than 2 years old.

#### **7. Expected Course**

The fever lasts 2 to 3 days, the runny or stuffy nose 1 to 2 weeks, and the cough 2 to 3 weeks.

### **Prevention of Influenza**

- Flu shots: Yearly flu shots are the best way to prevent influenza and are recommended for all children over 6 months of age.
- Preventing Spread to Others: The virus is spread by sneezing, coughing, and hand contact. Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash the hands frequently. Your child may return to child care or school after the fever is gone for at least 24 hours.

#### **Call your child's doctor Now (night or day) if:**

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Breathing becomes difficult or fast
- Dehydration occurs (no urine in 12 hours, dry mouth, no tears)

#### **Call your child's doctor during the day if:**

- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child is in the HIGH RISK group
- Earache or sinus pain occurs
- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- Cough lasts more than 3 weeks
- Your child becomes worse