

If Your Child Has Influenza

For Parents



Does my child have influenza?

Your child could have influenza if he or she suddenly develops a fever, perhaps accompanied by:

- Chills
- Headache
- A general feeling of illness with muscle aches and pains
- Pain
- A dry cough
- Possibly: vomiting or diarrhea

After the first symptoms of influenza virus infection appear, respiratory symptoms such as a sore throat, nasal congestion, and a cough may become more noticeable.¹

Although other viruses or a bacterial infection can cause these symptoms, your child's clinician generally can determine whether your child has influenza based on symptoms alone if:

- Many people in your area have influenza; and
- If the local health department has confirmed a flu outbreak.

Tests are available for confirming influenza infection but generally are not necessary. The test results will not change how your child is treated.²

How will my child be treated?

- Getting extra rest, drinking lots of liquids, and using acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever and aches and pains generally should treat your child's influenza.
- Symptoms will ease within a few days, with the illness resolving entirely after about a week.
- Do not give your child aspirin.
- Do not give your child over-the-counter cough or cold medicines without first talking to the clinician.

Most children with suspected influenza do not require treatment with antiviral medications.³

If your child is at increased risk of complications from influenza because he is younger than 2 years or has an underlying chronic medical condition, the clinician may prescribe an antiviral medication, either:

- Oseltamivir (for children at least 1 year of age); or
- Zanamivir (for children at least 7 years of age).⁴

References

1. American Academy of Pediatrics. Influenza. In: Pickering LK, ed. *2000 Red Book: Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 25th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2000:352.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Diagnosing flu. www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/testing.htm. Accessed March 14, 2012.
3. Committee on Infectious Diseases. American Academy of Pediatrics. Recommendations for prevention and control of influenza in children, 2011-2012. *Pediatrics*. 2011;128:813-825.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2011-2012 influenza antiviral medications: A summary for clinicians. www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals. Accessed March 14, 2012.