

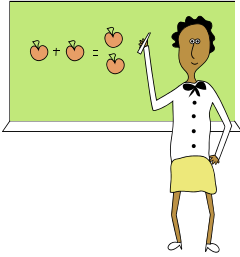
Qvhd-TIPS

A FAMILY HEALTH LETTER

"THE SEASON"



It may be apple and pumpkin time, but the "season" referred to here is the "cold and flu season." It is the time of the year when we begin to see the sneezes, coughs, and sometimes fevers that are generally mild illnesses, but spread like wildfires through our homes and schools.



WHO SHOULD GET A FLU SHOT? The recommendation this year is for an annual flu shot for **EVERYONE six months or older**. This season's flu shot will contain an H1N1 strain of influenza. So adults will only need one vaccination (a seasonal flu shot), rather than two vaccinations (last year a seasonal and an H1N1 flu shot.) Children will need one or two shots, depending upon their age and previous vaccination status. The 2010-11 vaccine will include the strains: A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)-like; A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2)-like; and B/Brisbane/60/2008-like.

Special Instructions for Children Being Vaccinated Against Seasonal Flu for the First Time: All children 6 months through 8 years of age are recommended to receive 2 doses of 2010-11 flu vaccine *unless* they have received: at least 1 dose of 2009 H1N1 vaccine last flu season, *and* at least 1 dose of seasonal vaccine *prior* to the 2009-2010 flu season *or* 2 doses of seasonal flu vaccine last flu season. If possible, the first dose should be given as soon as vaccine becomes available. The second dose should be given 28 or more days after the first dose. The first dose "primes" the immune system; the second dose provides immune protection. Children who only get one dose but need two doses can have reduced or no protection from a single dose of flu vaccine. Two doses are necessary to protect these children. If your child needs two doses, begin the process early, so that children are protected before influenza starts circulating in your community. Be sure to follow up to get your child a second dose if they need one. It usually takes about two weeks after the second dose for protection to begin. Children 9 years and older will need only one flu shot this season. (This information is taken directly from the document "Children, the flu and the flu vaccine" CDC Website, August 2010.)

- Children 6 months to 4 years
- All persons age 50 or older
- Adults and children who have chronic illnesses of the heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, neurological or metabolic systems
- Persons who are immunocompromised
- Women who will be pregnant during flu season
- Children and adolescents on long-term aspirin therapy
- Residents of nursing homes and other long term care facilities

Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu shot.
For some groups it is even more important:
 Children 6 months to 18 years
 Persons at risk for medical complications
 Persons who live with or care for persons at higher risk for influenza-related complications
 Pregnant and post partum women
 Health care workers

- Health care workers
- Persons who live with or care for persons at higher risk of influenza complications
- Caregivers of infants less than 6 months old
- Day Care workers



IF YOU WON'T GET A FLU SHOT FOR YOURSELF, DO IT FOR SOMEONE THAT YOU LOVE!
PROTECT INFANTS, GRANDPARENTS AND THOSE WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS!

For those parents with children in day care settings, you should note that in addition to the **recommendation** that everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot, the State of Connecticut **has passed a law**, that by January 1, 2011 and every January 1 thereafter, all children aged 6 to 59 months attending a child day care center, group day care home or family day care home are required (in order to attend) to have at least one dose of influenza vaccine between September 1 and December 31 of the preceding year.

Why is this being required by Connecticut and so strongly recommended on the national level? The following information from the CDC (www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm, "Children, the flu and Flu Vaccine", August 3, 2010) should answer this question and provide guidance on flu vaccines for children and their caregivers.

Flu is more dangerous than the common cold for children. Each year, seasonal flu places a large burden on the health and well-being of children and families. Children commonly need medical care because of influenza, especially before they turn 5 years old. Severe influenza complications are most common in children younger than 2 years old. Children with chronic health problems like asthma and diabetes are at especially high risk of developing serious flu complications. Each year an average of 20,000 children under the age of 5 are hospitalized because of influenza complications.



CDC recommends that all children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday get a seasonal flu vaccine. CDC also recommends that people in contact with certain groups of children get a seasonal flu vaccine in order to protect the child (or children) in their lives from the flu. The following contacts of children are recommended for seasonal influenza vaccination by CDC:

- Close contacts of children younger than 5 years old (people who live with them) should get a flu vaccine.
- Out-of-home caregivers (nannies, daycare providers, etc.) of children younger than 5 years old should get a flu vaccine.
- People who live with or have other close contact with a child or children of any age with a chronic health problem (asthma, diabetes, etc.) should get a flu vaccine.
- In addition, CDC recommends that all health care workers be vaccinated each year to keep from spreading the flu to their patients.

When to Get Children Vaccinated Vaccination should begin as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the flu season, into December, January, and beyond. While seasonal influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time seasonal flu activity peaks in January or later. Because flu viruses change every year, the vaccine is updated annually. So even if you or your children got a flu vaccine last year, you both still need to get a flu vaccine this season to be protected. If October and November slip by, and you haven't gotten your children or yourself vaccinated, get vaccinated in December or later. For more information on this topic, District residents (Bethany, Hamden, North Haven and Woodbridge) can call Quinnipiac Valley Health District, 203 248-4528 or request on line, www.qvhd.org. **Note: QVHD will not be holding any flu clinics this flu season 2010-11. Please contact your child's primary care provider to make an appointment.**

TAKE 5: BEHAVIORS TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF FLU AND FLU-LIKE ILLNESS



“Through behavior, individuals can have a potentially big impact on a flu season’s severity.” (President’s Council of Advisors on Science, 2009) Besides getting a flu vaccine, there are **five basic behaviors** that everyone can “take” (and teach children) that can reduce the spread of flu and flu-like illness.

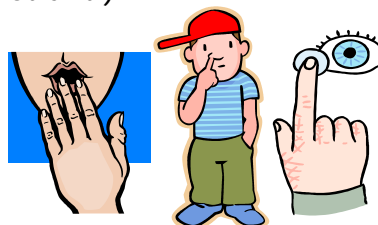


- **Use respiratory etiquette.** Cover your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze with a tissue. (If a tissue is unavailable, at least try to cough into your sleeve.) Dispose of used tissues in a trash can.



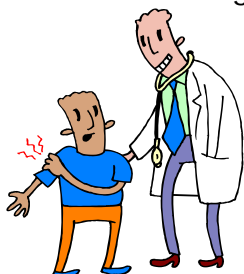
- **Wash your hands frequently and properly with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.** This is one of the most important actions you can take to prevent the spread of illnesses in yourself and others. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective for removing germs (but not dirt.)

- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.** Germs spread this way.



- **If you are sick with flu-like illness** (defined as a fever of 100 degrees or higher **and** a cough or sore throat) **stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.** The rest of the office or your child’s school does not want your germs.

- **Try to avoid persons who are ill** if you can and **don’t go visiting when you are sick.** Your intentions may be good in wanting to make that visit to the nursing home. But if you are sick, you will be bringing germs into an environment where people are more vulnerable to illness.

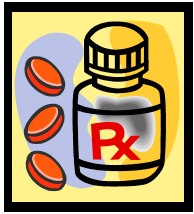


If you have a medical condition or a viral illness that doesn’t show signs of improvement within a few days, it is a good idea to check with your health care provider if you have an influenza-like illness. This is especially true if the illness is accompanied by a high fever, unusual symptoms, difficulty breathing, moderate pain or other severe symptoms. While most people recover without complications from the garden-variety viral illness, others may develop complications such as sinusitis or pneumonia.



(The following questions and answers are taken from "The Flu: A Guide for Parents", www.cdc.gov/flu, August 2010. For a complete copy of the brochure, visit the website or call QVHD, 203 248-4528 for a copy or request on line, www.qvhd.org)

IS THERE MEDICINE TO TREAT FLU? Medicines, called antivirals, can treat flu illness. They can make



people feel better and get better sooner. They may prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia, that can lead to hospitalization and even death. These drugs are different from antibiotics, but like antibiotics, they also need to be prescribed by a doctor. They work best when started during the first 2 days of illness. It is very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat flu in people who are very sick, such as people who are in the hospital or people who are at greater risk of having serious flu complications.

WHAT IF MY CHILD SEEMS VERY SICK? Even children who have always been healthy before or had the flu before can get a severe case of flu. Call for emergency care or take your child to a doctor right away if your child of any age has any of the warning or emergency signs below:



- ✓ Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- ✓ Bluish or gray skin color
- ✓ Not waking up or not interacting
- ✓ Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or making as much urine as they normally do)
- ✓ Being so irritable that the child doesn't want to be held
- ✓ Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- ✓ Has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes or asthma) and develops flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough



CAN MY CHILD GO TO SCHOOL, DAY CARE OR CAMP IF HE OR SHE IS SICK? NO! Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children or caregivers.

WHEN CAN MY CHILD GO BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER HAVING THE FLU? Keep your child home from school, day care or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. Fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines like Tylenol. A fever is defined as 100° F. (This recommendation should be held for all illnesses with fevers.)

WHAT SHOULD I USE FOR HAND CLEANING? Washing hands with soap and water (for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice) will help protect against many germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.



ATTENTION, PLEASE!

Qvhd-TIPS Family Health Letter is going electronic! Limited print copies will be available upon request. It is important to the staff of QVHD to know if you are able to access this newsletter and what you think about the format. Please send an email to Debbie Culligan, dculligan@qvhd.org if you read this issue.

I would also like to hear your comments.

Qvhd Tips, a family health letter, is a publication of the Quinnipiac Valley Health District, 1151 Hartford Turnpike, North Haven, CT 06473. Telephone: 248-4528. Web address: www.qvhd.org Author: V. Deborah Culligan. The content provided in this health letter is intended to provide you with current health information to assist you in making health decisions. **It is not intended to be legal or medical advice, or a substitute for recommendations made by your health care provider.**