

## Letter to Parents: Influenza

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Flu season is almost here! The ( ) wants to keep your children and the adults who care for them healthy.

The flu is a contagious disease caused by a virus. When children are in a group with other children, they are more likely to get infectious diseases like the flu. Flu can lead to serious health conditions like pneumonia or bacterial infections. Each year many children are hospitalized and some of them die from the flu. Children with certain conditions are at high risk for flu complications, but many who get flu are healthy children. Even one death is too many – it's very important for us to work together to protect the children in our care! Here are some ways we can work together to promote health and reduce illness.

### Get Vaccinated for Seasonal Influenza Every Year

A flu vaccine is the best way to protect against getting the flu.

- All people 6 months and older need a flu vaccine each year.
- Babies cannot get vaccinated until they are 6 months old. It is critical that people who live with or care for children, especially infants younger than 6 months, get vaccinated. (This is called “cocooning” -- when you protect babies by having those around them get vaccinated).

You may be interested to know that we ask all of our staff to get vaccinated for the flu!

### Use Good Hygiene

Whenever children are together, there is a chance of spreading infections. This is especially true among infants and toddlers who are likely to use their hands to wipe their noses or rub their eyes and then handle toys or touch other children. These children then touch their noses and rub their eyes so the virus goes from the nose or eyes of one child by way of hands or toys to the next child who then rubs his own eyes or nose.

Adults know to wash our hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing or wiping noses. It's also important to cover your own mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Also avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, as germs are spread this way.

( ) works hard to maintain these practices, and we spend time teaching the children to do these things as well. Please help us by reinforcing these things at home!

### Is Your Child Too Sick?

When children are healthy, they can go to child care or school, and parents can go to work. Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to make sure everyone can continue to participate in these important activities. However, 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.

To reduce the risk of becoming sick with influenza, child care providers and all the children being cared for must receive all recommended immunizations, including influenza vaccine. The single best way to protect against influenza is to get vaccinated each year. This critically important approach puts the health and safety of everyone in the child care setting first. Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older, including child care staff.

Below is a reminder of our guidelines.

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Thank you for everything you do to help us keep your child safe and healthy! If you have questions, please talk to ( ) or see the resources below.

Sincerely,

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### **RESOURCES**

#### **American Academy of Pediatrics**

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) (English)

[www.healthychildren.org/spanish](http://www.healthychildren.org/spanish) (Spanish)

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

<http://www.flu.gov/#>

#### **National Foundation for Infectious Diseases/Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition**

<http://preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/>

#### **Families Fighting Flu**

<http://www.familiesfightingflu.org/>

#### **Federal Emergency Management Agency/Ready.gov**

[http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Family\\_Emegency\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Family_Emegency_Plan.pdf)