

Letter to Parents: Influenza

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian,

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

Influenza (“the flu”) is an infectious disease caused by a virus. When children are in a group with other children, they are more likely to get infectious diseases like influenza. Flu can cause serious illness that may result in hospitalization or death. Children with certain conditions are at high risk for flu complications, but most who get the flu are healthy children. Even one death from the flu is too many – it’s very important for us to work together to protect the children in our care!

The single best way to protect against influenza is to get vaccinated *each year*. Yearly flu vaccination is needed because immunity against the flu wears off over time. In addition, the flu virus strains often change, so the vaccine also changes from year-to-year in order to match the flu viruses expected to be circulating in the community.

To reduce the risk of becoming sick with influenza, everyone 6 months of age and older, including child care staff, must receive the influenza vaccine. This critically important approach puts the health and safety of everyone in the child care setting first.

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.
- Pregnant women are at higher risk of severe illness from influenza. Flu shots may be given to pregnant women at any time during pregnancy. The flu vaccine will protect expectant mothers and their unborn babies and will help protect their baby in the first few months of life.
- Babies cannot get vaccinated until they are 6 months old. That’s why it is critical that people who live with or care for these young infants 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 use their hands to wipe their noses or rub their eyes and then handle toys or touch other children. In turn, these other children then touch their noses and rub their eyes so the virus now 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.

As adults, we know how to wash our hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing, sneezing, or wiping noses. It's also important to cover your own mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then wash your hands afterward. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, as germs are spread this way. The () 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 activities at home!

Is Your Child Too Sick to Go to Child Care?

When children are healthy, they can attend 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 (kept home) 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
- the staff can care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the other children in the group.

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 (English)

www.healthychildren.org/spanish (Spanish)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.flu.gov/#

National Foundation for Infectious Diseases/Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition

preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/

Families Fighting Flu

www.familiesfightingflu.org/