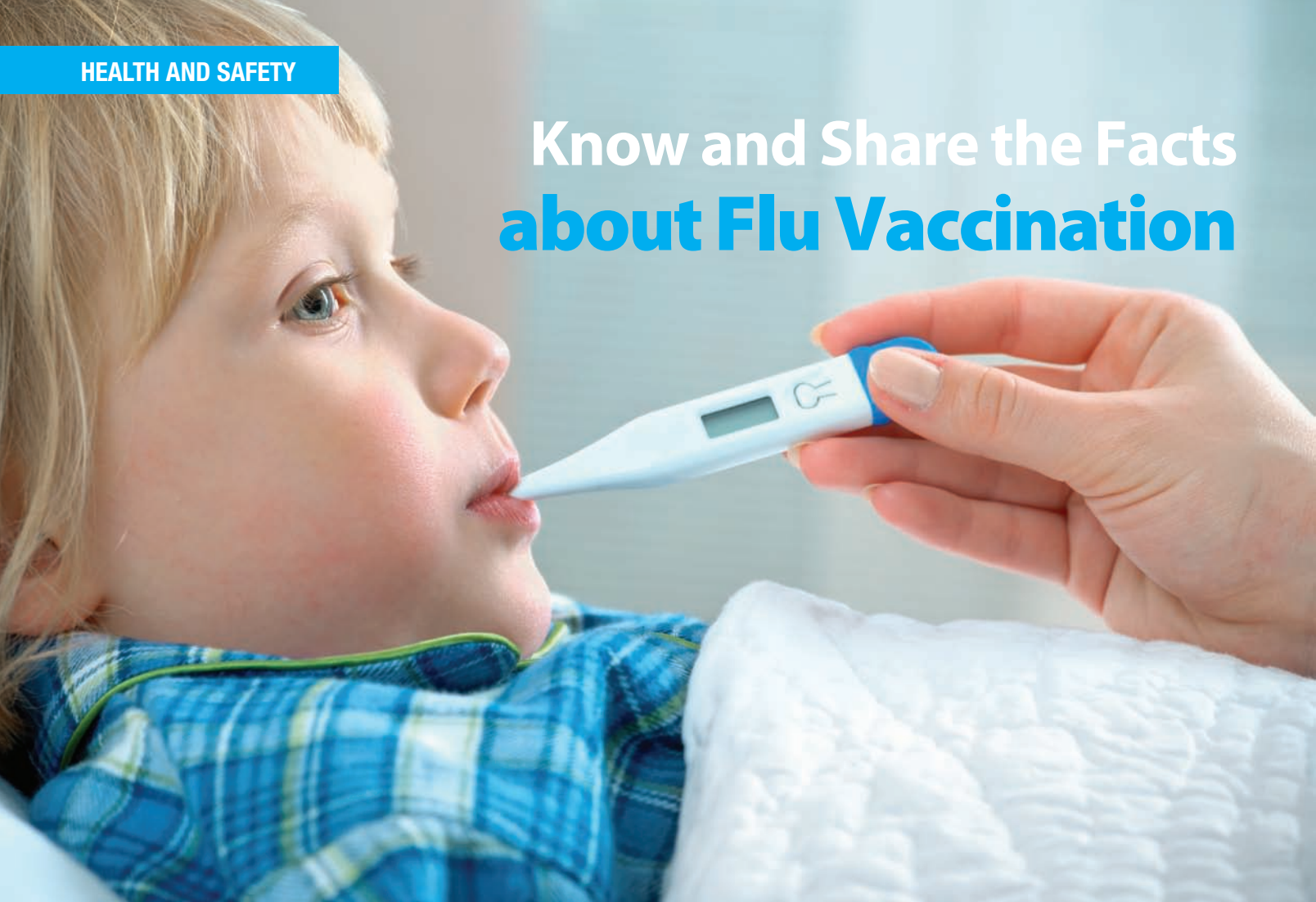


# Know and Share the Facts about Flu Vaccination



By Lisa Grohskopf, MD

As we head into fall, students, parents, and teachers are settling into the routine of a new school year. Another fall routine too many of us must endure is the spread of influenza viruses. An estimated 5 to 20 percent of the U.S. population becomes infected with the flu each year. About 200,000 of these flu sufferers are hospitalized each year, including 20,000 children under the age of 5. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers annual vaccination to be the single best way to prevent the flu. Parents and teachers are essential allies in efforts to increase awareness about the importance of flu vaccination, and encourage more people to protect themselves by getting vaccinated.

## The facts about flu

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and sometimes can lead to death. Symptoms of flu can include fever or a feverish feeling, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache, fatigue, vomiting, and diarrhea. Flu can be especially dangerous for young children, pregnant women, older people, and those with certain chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, and neurological disorders. Flu can worsen chronic conditions and can lead to other complications, like pneumonia.

## The facts about flu vaccines

Flu vaccines have been given safely to hundreds of millions of people in the United States for more than 50 years. Each year, CDC works closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, healthcare providers, and state and local health departments to ensure the highest safety standards for flu vaccines.

There are many different flu viruses. The ones that are most common can change from year to year. A new flu vaccine is made each year to protect against the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness. So, vaccination is recommended each year.

Flu vaccines cannot give people the flu. The flu shot contains inactivated, or killed, virus that is injected with a needle. It is recommended that people 6 months and older, both healthy and those with chronic medical conditions, receive the flu shot. A spray flu vaccine administered through the nose, called a live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), is made with live, weakened flu viruses. LAIV is approved for use in healthy people ages 2 through 49 years who are not pregnant.

## CDC's flu vaccine recommendations

Vaccination is the most important step in protecting children against the flu. Anyone, even healthy children and adults, can get very sick from the flu. You can protect your child not just by getting them vaccinated, but also by getting vaccinated yourself and encouraging other parents, teachers, school staff, and caregivers to do the same. Studies show that children who miss fewer days of school, particularly in the lower grades, are more likely to succeed in their studies and graduate on time.

CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine every year. Children 6 months through 8 years of age who are getting a flu vaccine for the first time require two doses. Some children who have received the flu vaccine previously will also need two doses; your child's healthcare provider can tell you whether your child needs two doses to be fully protected. Women who are pregnant during flu season not only can help protect themselves by getting vaccinated, but also can help protect their infants from infection for up to 6 months after birth.

Flu vaccines are especially important for those more likely to get flu-related complications and the people who care for them who may expose them to the flu:

- Children younger than 5 years, especially younger than 2 years, and their caregivers
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women
- American Indians/Alaskan Native populations
- People with medical conditions
- Healthcare personnel

### Celebrate PTA Healthy Lifestyles Month

Throughout November, PTAs nationwide participate in PTA Healthy Lifestyles Month by conducting programs and events that promote health education, physical activity, and family engagement. Knowing that a healthy child can achieve and learn more, PTAs encourage families to increase their physical activity, eat fresh fruits and vegetables, develop community-oriented physical activity programs, and promote healthy lifelong behaviors. For more information, go to [PTA.org/healthy\\_lifestyles.asp](http://PTA.org/healthy_lifestyles.asp).

### When and where to get a flu vaccine

CDC recommends that you get vaccinated before flu begins spreading in your community. Flu activity can begin as early as October and last as late as May, but it usually peaks in January or February.

Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, government health departments, pharmacies, workplaces, and in some schools. You can find vaccination locations in your area by visiting [Flushot.Healthmap.org](http://Flushot.Healthmap.org).

As trusted members of the community, parents and teachers can help protect their communities by encouraging people to get vaccinated and getting vaccinated themselves. The fewer people who get sick with the flu, the more everyone will have time to engage in all of the fun and important activities that are part of each school year.

*Lisa Grohskopf, MD, MPH, is medical officer, influenza division, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia. She is board-certified in infectious disease medicine and internal medicine. To learn more, visit [CDC.gov/Flu](http://CDC.gov/Flu).*



## Calling All Treasurers: File your Form 990 before it's too late!

National PTA wishes to remind all state and local PTAs that it is time to file your IRS Form 990, 990-EZ or 990N. The deadline for all PTAs that maintain a fiscal year end of June 30 is **November 15, 2012**. All PTAs must file a Form 990 regardless of size. **Failure to file could result in the loss of your tax-exempt status.**

The form your unit must file depends upon your unit's gross receipts and total assets:

- **Form 990** must be filed if your unit has gross receipts greater than or equal to \$200,000 or total assets greater than or equal to \$500,000 at the end of the tax year.
- **Form 990-EZ** can be filed if your unit has gross receipts less than \$200,000 and total assets less than \$500,000 at the end of the tax year.
- **Form 990N** can be filed if your unit has gross receipts of \$50,000 or less.

For more information on filing your Form 990, 990-EZ or 990N, go to [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) keyword 990, or contact Jessica Renzi at National PTA at (703) 518-1250, [jrenzi@pta.org](mailto:jrenzi@pta.org).