



# Infectious Diseases in Education and Child Care Settings

Infectious diseases account for millions of school days lost each year for kindergarten through 12th grade public school students in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports:

- 40% of children age 5 to 17 years missed 3 or more school days in the past year because of illness or injury.
- Nearly 22 million school days are lost each year due to colds alone.
- 38 million school days are lost each year due to the influenza virus.

Schools inherently foster the transmission of infections from person to person because they are a group setting in which people are in close contact and share supplies and equipment. But, schools also can be instrumental in keeping their communities healthy by:

- Encouraging sick students and staff to stay home and seek medical attention for severe illness.
- Facilitating hand hygiene by supplying soap and paper towels and teaching good hand hygiene practices.
- Being vigilant about cleaning and disinfecting classroom materials and surfaces.
- Providing messages in daily announcements about preventing infectious disease.
- Adopting healthy practices such as safe handling of food and use of standard precautions when handling bodily fluids and excretions.
- Encouraging students and staff to get annual influenza vaccinations.

UnitedHeartland.com  
1-800-258-2667

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## Additional Resources

To find a flu vaccine location near you, go to <http://vaccine.healthmap.org/>.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) or [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/infectious/>

United Heartland is committed to providing and directing our customers to helpful resources regarding exposures to infectious diseases and bloodborne pathogens. For questions or more information, contact us at 800-258-2667.

## Common Misconceptions About Flu

### The flu isn't that serious.

The flu is contagious and can lead to severe illness even in healthy children and adults. The number of U.S. flu-related deaths is estimated to have ranged from 3,000 to 49,000 per season.

### My job doesn't put me at risk for getting the flu.

The flu can spread quickly in child care and school settings. Children are less likely to have immunity against flu viruses and therefore are more likely to get infected. In child care settings, children are constantly in close contact with one another and their caregivers, toys and other objects are often shared and young children may not be able to wash their hands well or cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze. These things increase the risk of flu spreading in these settings.

### I don't need to get vaccinated.

Everyone 6 months of age or older should get the flu vaccine every year. Even healthy children and adults can get sick from the flu. Pregnant women, adults 65 and over, children younger than 5 years of age and people with certain medical conditions are at greater risk of getting very sick from the flu. It is important for people who work in child care settings to get the vaccine to protect themselves, their families and the children they care for. Infants younger than 6 months are too young to get the vaccine and are more likely to get very sick from the flu so it is especially important for their caregivers to get vaccinated.

### I got the vaccine last year so I don't need to get it again.

Flu viruses are constantly changing. Each year flu vaccines are updated to protect against the most common circulating viruses. Also, the protection the vaccine provides against the flu decreases over time, so it is important to get a flu vaccine every year.

### The flu vaccine doesn't work.

While protection from the flu vaccine can vary, getting vaccinated is the single best way to prevent the flu. Flu vaccines are most effective when the vaccine matches the flu viruses that are circulating in the community.

### The flu vaccine can give me the flu.

The flu vaccine cannot give you the flu. The shot contains dead viruses, and the nasal spray contains weakened viruses. Neither can cause flu illness. However, sometimes people may have flu-like symptoms after getting the vaccine. These symptoms can be caused by exposure to a virus other than the flu. You can also experience flu-like symptoms if you were exposed to the flu virus before you were vaccinated or in the two weeks it takes for the vaccine to take effect. You can also be exposed to a flu virus that is not included in this season's vaccine.

### The vaccine is not safe.

Hundreds of millions of people have safely received the flu vaccine over the past 50 years.

