

Liquid tamiflu for kids in short supply

January 8 2014, by Dennis Thompson, Healthday Reporter



Shortage should be resolved in week; Tamiflu capsules and flu shots widely available, U.S. officials say.

(HealthDay)—Manufacturing problems have created a shortage of the liquid form of Tamiflu, which is designed for young children who can't swallow capsules, U.S. health officials announced Wednesday.

The drug's maker, Genentech, has fallen behind in production of this version of the flu medication, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

However, the shortage doesn't include the capsule form of Tamiflu, which remains in good supply, said Dr. Michael Jhung, a medical officer with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Influenza Division.

Flu vaccines also remain widely available and unaffected by shortages, FDA spokesman Eric Pahon said. The CDC recommends vaccination for everyone older than 6 months of age as the best way to try to ward

off the flu.

A shortage of liquid Tamiflu could cause some children to be sick with the flu longer, Jhung said. However, capsule Tamiflu can be converted into liquid form by a pharmacy to treat very ill children, he said.

"For those patients who cannot swallow capsules, the capsules can be opened and the contents may be mixed with chocolate syrup or some other thick, sweet liquid, as directed by a health-care professional," according to the FDA announcement on the shortage.

Jhung added that this is a "spot" shortage that should only affect some parts of the country. The FDA expects the shortage to be resolved within a week.

Genentech, which cited heavy demand as the reason for the shortage, contacted the FDA a couple of days ago about the problem and is acting quickly to resolve it, Jhung said.

Dr. Robert Wergin, president-elect of the American Academy of Family Physicians, said Tamiflu reduces [flu symptoms](#), but it's not a cure for the flu.

Wergin also said Tamiflu is the only option for treating flu in [young children](#). The other flu antiviral drug, Relenza, is not recommended for children younger than 7 as a [flu treatment](#), and not younger than 5 as a preventive therapy to protect against flu. On the other hand, Tamiflu is approved down to 2 weeks of age, he said.

Wergin, a family physician in Milford, Neb., said Tamiflu treatment should begin within 24 hours of infection. "The sooner you start it, the better," he said. "It works on disrupting viral replication, and the longer you wait the more it will have spread."

The liquid Tamiflu shortage comes during what has been a typical [flu season](#), Jhung said.

"We're not experiencing an unexpected amount of influenza this season," he said. "We anticipate increasing activity, but none of this is out of the ordinary for flu season in America."

Flu remains below epidemic levels, according to the latest CDC statistics. There are about 5.8 confirmed [flu cases](#) per 100,000 people. Two children have suffered flu-related deaths, according to the CDC.

The breakdown of flu activity across the United States looked like this on Dec. 28, the date of the most recent CDC statistics:

- 25 states reported widespread flu activity: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming.
- 20 states reported regional [flu activity](#): California, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia and Wisconsin.
- 3 states—Arizona, Delaware and Vermont—and Puerto Rico reported local flu activity.
- 2 states—Hawaii and Rhode Island—and the District of Columbia reported sporadic [flu](#) activity.

More information: For more on the flu, visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Copyright © 2014 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Liquid tamiflu for kids in short supply (2014, January 8) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-01-liquid-tamiflu-kids-short.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.