

## Kids who were preemies more vulnerable to flu complications: study

December 4 2014

---



Current guidelines don't identify them as a high-risk group, but they should, researchers say.

(HealthDay)—Children who were born prematurely are twice as likely to develop pneumonia and other flu-related complications, so they should be first in line for flu shots every year, researchers suggest.

However, current U.S., U.K. and World Health Organization guidelines do not identify these kids as a high-risk group for [flu complications](#), the study authors noted.

In their analysis, the researchers reviewed data from 27 studies that included more than 14,000 [children](#). The finding about children who were born prematurely is new, according to the report published in the Dec. 3 issue of *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*.

"Considering that around 10 percent [12.9 million] of the world's babies

are born prematurely [before 37 weeks gestation]—with preterm delivery rates of around 6 percent in Europe, 11 percent in North America and 12 percent in Africa—it's a significant public health issue and has major implications for [policy makers](#)," study author Dr. Kay Wang, from the University of Oxford, said in a journal news release.

The researchers also confirmed U.S., U.K. and WHO guidelines that state children with neurological disorders, weakened immune systems and diabetes are at increased risk for flu-related complications.

Youngsters with [sickle cell disease](#) and those younger than 2 are also at greater risk but are not deemed to be so under current British guidelines, the study authors added.

They also found that obese children and those with respiratory disorders are not at higher risk, even though the U.S., U.K. and WHO guidelines state that they are.

Another important finding is that having a number of medical conditions increases a child's risk of being hospitalized with flu-related complications. Hospitalization rates were 74 percent for children with more than one medical condition, compared with 48 percent for those with one condition.

"Policy makers need to be aware of which groups of children should be prioritized when delivering interventions [e.g., flu vaccination and antiviral drugs] to prevent influenza and influenza-related [complications](#), particularly during influenza epidemics and pandemics," Wang concluded.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [children and the flu](#).

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

Citation: Kids who were preemies more vulnerable to flu complications: study (2014, December 4) retrieved 8 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-12-kids-preemies-vulnerable-flu-complications.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.