

Put flu shot on the back-to-school checklist

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(HealthDay)—Annual flu vaccines are appropriate for everyone aged 6 months or older, the American Academy of Pediatrics reminds parents.

It urges parents to vaccinate their kids to reduce the risk they'll develop severe, life-threatening influenza.

Flu killed more than 100 children in the United States in the 2016-2017 season, and thousands of kids were hospitalized. Unvaccinated kids are at especially high risk of death from flu, the academy says.

"Getting a [flu shot](#) as soon as the vaccine is available in your community should be on every parent's checklist, along with other back-to-school routines," said Dr. Flor Munoz, co-author of new academy flu vaccine recommendations.

"We know that the flu should not be taken lightly. Everyone in the household, including pregnant women, grandparents, and child care providers, should be vaccinated to help prevent its spread," Munoz said in an academy news release.

For maximum protection, the academy recommends the following: If possible, kids should get the flu vaccine by the end of October. And children from 6 months to age of 8 will need two doses if they have not previously been fully vaccinated with two doses of flu vaccine, the guidelines say.

Also, the pediatricians' group advises against the nasal flu [vaccine](#), which has shown weakness against certain flu viruses in recent years. This caution is in keeping with a recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Take special care to vaccinate kids at high risk of complications from flu, such as those with asthma, heart conditions, diabetes and weakened immune systems.

Women who are pregnant, hoping to conceive or recently pregnant

should also get the [flu vaccine](#), as should healthcare and childcare workers.

"Vaccination is the best available preventive measure we have against influenza," said Dr. Henry Bernstein, co-author of the recommendations. However, he said flu vaccination rates have been suboptimal in children and adults over the past seven seasons.

Physicians should consider immediate antiviral treatment in kids who appear to have been infected with the flu, the guidelines say.

"Clinical judgment is an important factor in treatment decisions for children who present with influenza-like illness," Bernstein said. "The best results are seen when treatment is started within 48 hours of symptom onset."

The recommendations were published online Sept. 4 in *Pediatrics*.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has tips on [caring for children with colds or flu](#).

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