

# All children should receive flu vaccine ASAP, doctors advise

September 3 2018

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(HealthDay)—All children 6 months of age and older should have a flu

shot, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says.

A [flu shot](#) significantly reduces a child's risk of severe illness and flu-related death, according to the policy statement published online Sept. 3 in the journal *Pediatrics*.

"The [flu virus](#) is common—and unpredictable. It can cause serious complications even in healthy [children](#)," said Dr. Flor Munoz of the AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases. "Being immunized reduces the risk of a child being hospitalized due to flu."

The 2017-2018 [flu season](#) was one of the most severe on record, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As of Aug. 18, 2018, thousands of U.S. children were hospitalized and 179 kids died of flu-related causes. About 80 percent of the children who died had not had a flu shot, according to the CDC.

Pediatricians should offer flu [vaccine](#) injections to all children 6 months and older as soon as it becomes available, preferably by the end of October, the AAP said in a news release.

An injection is the best choice, because it has provided the most consistent protection against all strains of the flu virus in recent years, the AAP advised.

The [nasal spray vaccine](#) has been less effective in the past few flu seasons. But it can be used for children who would otherwise not receive flu vaccine, as long as they are 2 years of age or older, are healthy and do not have an underlying medical condition, the AAP said.

For example, the nasal spray would be appropriate if a child refuses an injection or if a doctor's office runs out of flu shots.

The number of doses of flu vaccine depends on a child's age and vaccine history. Children between 6 months and 8 years of age require two doses the first time they are vaccinated against flu. Children 9 years of age and older require only one dose, regardless of their vaccination history, the AAP said.

Children with egg allergy can receive flu vaccine with the same precautions considered for any vaccine. Pregnant women can be given the injected [flu vaccine](#) at any time.

Video courtesy: American Academy of Pediatrics

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

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