

# Parent Discussion Guide

## Distinguishing Flu vs. Cold

Influenza (or flu) is different from a cold. Both a cold and the flu are respiratory illnesses, yet they are caused by different types of viruses with different symptoms. The flu usually comes on suddenly. To recognize flu symptoms, remember **Flu F.A.C.T.S.** (**F**ever, **A**ches, **C**hills, **T**iredness, and **S**udden onset). Children can have additional flu symptoms that are rare in adults, including vomiting and diarrhea.<sup>1</sup>

## Flu Facts

- Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu.<sup>2</sup>
- Children can pass the flu virus to others for a period of more than seven days after symptoms start.<sup>3</sup>
- On average, one-third of family members in families with school-age children are infected with the flu each year.<sup>2</sup>

Typically, influenza affects five to 20 percent of the U.S. population each year. While the flu season is unpredictable, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that the flu can peak anytime between November and March.<sup>4</sup>

## Flu Transmission

Schools are a prime location for the flu virus to attack and spread.<sup>2</sup> It can be challenging to prevent children from getting the flu during the school year because:

- Flu is a respiratory illness.
- Flu viruses are spread mainly by respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing and talking.
- Droplets can spread to others up to about six feet away and may land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- Less often, a person may get the flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.
- Schools are a prime location for the flu virus to spread. It can be challenging to prevent children from getting the flu during the school year so it's important to take preventative measures.

## Preventing the Flu

- 1) **Vaccination** is the cornerstone of flu prevention. The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine.
- 2) **Good hygiene** habits help control spread of the flu virus. Teach your child these tips to help prevent the spread of flu virus:
  - a. Cover your coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or a tissue
  - b. Wash your hands with soap and water
  - c. Avoid touching your face – especially your eyes, mouth, and nose – as it can spread germs
- 3) **Antiviral flu medicines** prescribed by a doctor directly attack the flu virus and are an important adjunct to vaccination for flu prevention and control.

## What to Do if Your Child Gets the Flu

Even with preventative measures, sometimes you or your child may still get the flu. If your child has flu symptoms, schedule an appointment with your pediatrician. Your pediatrician may prescribe an antiviral flu medicine that directly attacks the flu virus. Antivirals are an important adjunct to vaccination for flu prevention and control.<sup>5</sup>

If your child gets the flu, it's important that they spend time resting. Keep your child at home for at least 24 hours after his or her fever is gone.<sup>6</sup>