

## Children's Hospital Boston Down Syndrome Program Flu Vaccine Recommendations for Children with Down syndrome

1. Follow recommendations for all children – yearly flu vaccine is now recommended for ALL people over 6 months of age.
2. The 2011-2012 seasonal flu vaccine protects against 3 strains of flu (identical to last year, one of the strains is H1N1) and it is likely to give some protection against additional similar strains as well.
3. Seasonal flu vaccine is available as a live, attenuated vaccine (nasal spray) for ages 2-49 years or inactivated vaccine (injection) for 6 months and older.
4. Infectious disease experts from Children's Hospital Boston, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, and the CDC agree that kids with Down syndrome can get either the live, attenuated vaccine as long as they don't have one of the other conditions for which it is not recommended (such as immunodeficiency, heart disease, lung disease, asthma, wheezing, cerebral palsy see CDC website for more details -- note people in those categories can and should get the inactivated shot). Egg allergy should be discussed with the physician.
5. The first year that kids under 9 years old get the flu shot, they need to get **two** doses separated by one month. Note that because the strains of flu in this year's vaccines are the same as last years, children under 9 who only got one dose last year just need one dose this year. The nasal forms do not have preservatives. Single-use vials of flu vaccine for injection do not have preservative but multi-use vials do have preservative which may include thimerosal. There is no evidence that the small amount of mercury in thimerosal has any adverse health effects other than redness and swelling at the vaccine site but if it is a concern, you can request preservative-free vaccine.  
See: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Concerns/thimerosal/index.html>
6. Call your child's pediatrician to see if flu vaccine is available. Vaccine is also available at many pharmacies.  
Search by zip code here: <http://www.flu.gov/individualfamily/vaccination/locator.html>
7. If your baby is too young to be vaccinated, get yourself and any caregivers vaccinated.
8. Detailed information is available at the following websites:
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/> Lots of information about the vaccines.



- <http://www.aap.org/immunization/> Information from the American Academy of Pediatrics -- this is also a great place to learn more about vaccine safety in general.
- [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) – this has great information and this year features a video for the kids of Secretary of Health and Human Services Sebelius with Elmo giving tips on staying healthy.
- [www.Mass.gov](http://www.Mass.gov) (search for “flu” to get to the correct part of the website)

**MOST IMPORTANTLY:**

- wash hands
- cover your cough (with the elbow or a tissue NOT the hand),
- throw out used tissues right away and wash hands after,
- get some hand sanitizer and carry it around with you,
- don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth without washing your hands,
- teach your kids proper hand-washing and how to cover their coughs
- Stay home from work if you are sick and keep kids home from school if they are sick.

Kids must stay home from school/daycare until they have been fever free with no fever-reducing medication (ibuprofen or acetaminophen) for at least 24 hours. Some schools may have longer requirements for a symptom-free period before returning.

If your child becomes ill with flu symptoms, please call your pediatrician. There are two antiviral medications available for treating the flu oseltamivir (brand name Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (brand name Relenza®). They can help decrease the length of the illness or its severity but must be given early in the illness (within the first 2 days). These are particularly recommended for children at higher risk for complications such as those under 2 years and those with cardiac, respiratory or immune disorders.

**Let's all have a healthy winter!!!**