



# Brunswick County Health Services

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David M. Stanley, Interim Director

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

The flu is very prevalent right now, particularly in young children. Following is some information about the flu to be aware of.

## **What Parents Should Know**

*How serious is flu?* While flu illness can vary from mild to severe, children often need medical care because of flu. Children younger than 5 years old and children of any age with certain long-term health problems are at increased risk of flu complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections. Some health problems that are known to make children more vulnerable to flu include asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system.

*How does flu spread?* Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly by droplets made when someone with flu coughs, sneezes, or talks. Droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. A person also can get flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.

*What are flu symptoms?* Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, feeling tired and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). Some people with flu will not have a fever.

*What are some other ways I can protect my child against flu?* In addition to getting a flu vaccine, you and your child should take everyday actions to help prevent the spread of germs. Stay away from people who are sick as much as possible to keep from getting sick yourself. If you or your child are sick, avoid others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. Also, remember to regularly cover your coughs and sneezes, wash your hands often, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and clean surfaces that may be contaminated with flu viruses. These everyday actions can help reduce your chances of getting sick and prevent the spread of germs to others if you are sick. However, a yearly flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu illness.

## **If Your Child Is Sick**

*What can I do if my child gets sick?* Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness. Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids. If your child is 5 years or older and does not have a long-term health problem and gets flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed. Children younger than 5 years old – especially those younger than 2 years – and children of any age with certain long-term health problems (including asthma or any lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system), are at higher risk of serious flu complications. Because children at higher risk of serious

flu complications can benefit from early antiviral treatment of flu, parents of such children should contact their child's doctor if they develop flu symptoms.

*What if my child seems very sick?* Even healthy children can get very sick from flu. If your child is experiencing the following emergency warning signs, you should go to the emergency room:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
  - Bluish lips or face
  - Ribs pulling in with each breath
  - Chest pain
  - Severe muscle pain (child refuses to walk)
  - Dehydration (no urine for 8 hours, dry mouth, no tears when crying)
  - Not alert or interacting when awake
  - Seizures
  - Fever above 104°F
  - In children less than 12 weeks, any fever
  - Fever or cough that improve but then return or worsen
  - Worsening of chronic medical conditions
- This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptom that is severe or concerning.

*Is there a medicine to treat flu?* Yes. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that can be used to treat flu illness. They can shorten your illness and make it milder, and they can prevent serious complications that could result in a hospital stay. Antivirals work best when started during the first two days of illness. Antiviral drugs are recommended to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example, people who are in the hospital) or people who are at higher risk of serious flu complications who get flu symptoms. Antivirals can be given to most children and pregnant people.

*How long can a sick person spread flu to others?* People with flu may be able to infect others from one day before getting sick to up to five to seven days after. Severely ill people or young children may be able to spread the flu longer, especially if they still have symptoms.

*Can my child go to school, day care, or camp if he or she is sick?* No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid spreading flu to other children or caregivers.

*When can my child go back to school after having flu?* Keep your child home from school, day care, or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100 °F (37.8°C) \* or higher.

*\*Many authorities use either 100 °F (37.8 °C) or 100.4 °F (38.0 °C) as a cut-off for fever, but this number can vary depending on factors such as the method of measurement and the age of the person.*

Parents can schedule flu shot appointments through Brunswick County Health Services <https://www.brunswickcountync.gov/health/flu> or 910-253-2339. Parents may also contact their primary care provider or pharmacy.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm) or call 800-CDC-INFO.

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