

# 5 flu facts to 'Stay in the Game' this flu season

It's that time of year again ... yes, it's flu season. Beginning as early as October and lasting as late as May, flu season is often dreaded. But the good news is that you don't have to let the flu slow you down from doing the things you love — whether it's skiing, having hot chocolate by the fireplace, playing basketball, hanging out with friends or going to the movies. Getting an annual flu vaccination is safe and effective, as well as the best preventative measure available to protect yourself and those around you from this serious disease.

Here are five important facts to know about the flu to help keep you healthy and having fun this flu season:

**1. Flu is a highly-contagious and serious disease for everyone — even healthy people.**



Influenza or “the flu” is a highly-contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract (ears, nose and throat). Flu spreads through tiny droplets made when a person talks, coughs or sneezes — and may spread up to 6 feet away. Each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized, making the flu a serious disease affecting people of all ages.

## **2. Flu is dangerous for everyone — especially for children.**



Children are two to three times more likely to develop the flu than adults because of their less-developed immune systems. In fact, in the U.S., more than 20,000 children are hospitalized and approximately 100 children die due to the flu each year. Additionally, children more easily spread germs to others, such as classmates, family or friends.

## **3. Flu is often confused with the common cold, so it’s important to know the difference between the symptoms.**



While the flu and the common cold have many similar symptoms, flu symptoms tend to develop quickly (usually one to four days after a person is exposed to the flu virus) and are usually more severe than the typical sneezing and congestion associated with a cold. Flu symptoms usually include: fever, headache, extreme tiredness, sore throat, dry cough, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are also common symptoms in children. It's important to pay close attention to your symptoms or those of your family member and seek medical attention as soon as possible.

**4. Flu is unpredictable, and flu strains change from year to year.**



Flu is a viral infection made up of different types of strains, including A, B and C. Some seasons are more severe than others and we have no way of knowing what type of flu season it will be. Getting a flu vaccination each and every year is the best way to help prevent getting this highly-contagious disease or giving it to someone else.

**5. Flu is preventable with an annual flu vaccination.**



It's important to make the time each and every year for a flu vaccination. Just like going for yearly check-ups to the doctor or the dentist, an annual flu vaccination keeps you and your family healthy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get an annual flu vaccination. It's always important to practice other healthy habits, too, such as:

- \* **Washing your hands.** Frequent hand washing keeps lots of germs out of our bodies.
- \* **Staying home if you don't feel well.** Should you become infected, keep the germs from spreading.
- \* **Doing the elbow cough.** Cough into elbows, not hands where it's more likely to spread bacteria and viruses.
- \* **Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
- \* **Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects frequently.** This is especially important when someone is sick.

For more information about flu and flu prevention, Stay in the Game educational materials or to read personal stories of families who have experienced the severity of the flu first-hand, please visit: [www.familiesfightingflu.org](http://www.familiesfightingflu.org).

### **About Families Fighting Flu**

Families Fighting Flu is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) volunteer-based advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the lives of children. Our organization includes families whose children have suffered serious medical complications or died from influenza, as well as other advocates and health care practitioners committed to flu prevention. In honor of our children, we work to increase awareness about the seriousness of the disease and to reduce the number of childhood hospitalizations and deaths caused by the flu each year by increasing vaccination rates.