

Touched by the Flu

Mothers are sharing their stories to help others better understand the seriousness of the flu



Cargile Family Story

My name is Lisa, and I would like to share my family's story with you. One evening in 2011, a day like any other, my 10-year-old daughter Maya came down with a slight fever. By the next night, her fever had spiked to 104 degrees.

Maya's condition worsened, despite a visit to the pediatrician and a prescription for antibiotics. Two days later, it appeared that her fever had broken, but she didn't really seem any better. We took her to the emergency room. The doctor immediately recognized that something was terribly wrong and that Maya was fighting for her life. She was transferred to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) where she remained in a medically-induced coma and on a ventilator for three days while her condition gradually improved. After coming off life support, she continued to receive treatment until she was finally discharged from the hospital over a week later.

Tests revealed that Maya was fighting an influenza (or "flu") virus. I know that a flu vaccine could have prevented this horrible ordeal. My greatest regret is that I did not get Maya vaccinated that year. Now I know how dangerous the flu can be and just how quickly it can take a life. I want you to know that influenza can be serious and can even become life-threatening in a matter of days. The best treatment is prevention. Please vaccinate your child against the flu.



Marotta Family Story

You never think it will happen to you – losing a child to the flu. But I can tell you that it does happen, and more frequently than you might think. My name is Serese, and my son, Joseph, was a healthy, 5-year-old kindergartner in the fall of 2009.

Joseph's story began innocently enough, with a snuffle and a cough. It wasn't long before he became lethargic and was having a hard time breathing. We called our pediatrician and took him to an urgent care center where they realized his blood oxygen levels were very low. They sent him to the local children's hospital where he was diagnosed and treated for pneumonia. Seven days into his hospital stay, Joseph tested positive for H1N1.

Joseph was in the hospital for a total of ten days and his condition was never critical until the last eight hours before his death. As Joseph and I were discussing Halloween costumes, his blood pressure plummeted and the doctors couldn't figure out why. The next 30 minutes were like something out of a TV show, with doctors and nurses running around trying to save my precious son.

Joseph passed away the morning of October 18, 2009 from complications of H1N1 flu. He had not been vaccinated against H1N1 because it was not yet available in our community. I have learned that the flu does not discriminate. The flu is a serious disease that claims the lives of more than 100 children a year in the United States. As a parent, I urge you to get your child an annual flu vaccination. It could literally save the life of someone you love.

**It's Not 'JUST' the Flu - It's a Serious Disease!
Get Your Flu Vaccine Today!**

www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/school

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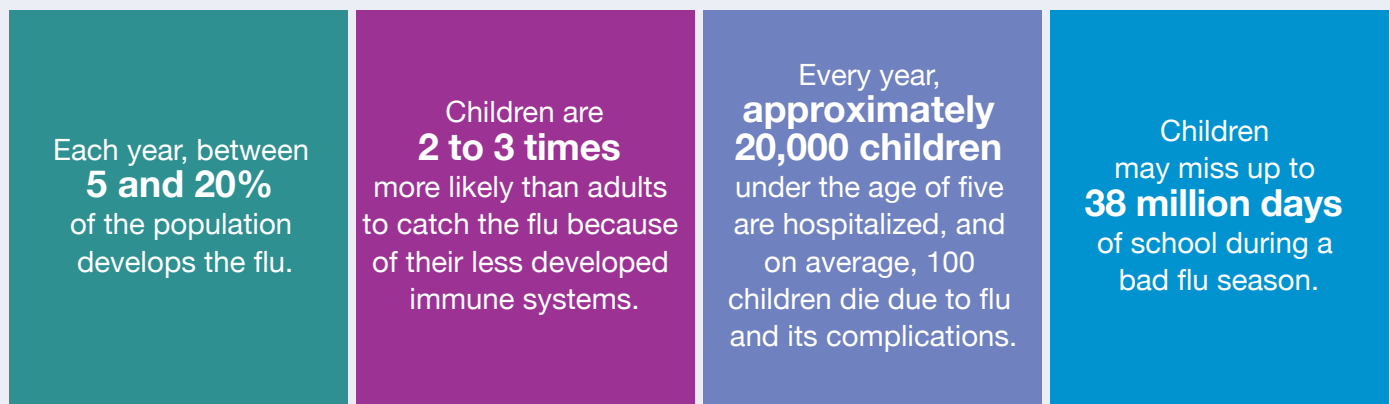
The flu is a serious and highly contagious disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the best way to protect yourself and your family is by ensuring that everyone 6 months of age and older gets an annual flu vaccination.

It's also important to be informed about the flu. Here are some facts to help you better understand this disease.

Did You Know?

- Flu spreads through tiny droplets made when a person talks, coughs or sneezes and may spread up to 6 feet away.
- Flu symptoms usually start suddenly and may include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and tiredness. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are also common symptoms in children.
- Sometimes a flu vaccine isn't well matched to that season's circulating strains of flu. If this happens, it's still important to get vaccinated because it still offers some protection against the circulating flu strains.
- Although the flu vaccine is never 100% effective, it is the best protection available against the flu.

Flu By the Numbers in the United States



In addition to an annual flu vaccination, other ways to keep yourself and your family healthy during flu season are:

- **Wash hands often:** use soap and water or hand sanitizer to stop the spread of germs.
- **Stay home if you don't feel well:** keep germs from spreading to others.
- **Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze:** use a tissue or cough into your elbow.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth:** germs spread this way.
- **Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs:** this is particularly important when someone is sick.

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