

## **INFLUENZA VACCINES 2011-2012 (NOT H1N1/Swine Flu)**

- Influenza, "the flu", is caused by a virus, which can produce these symptoms: fever, chills, muscle aches, cough, watery eyes, and/or sore throat. In Buffalo, the yearly flu virus is usually around from December through March. **Review the website tabs "Common Symptom Handouts" and "Newsletter" for discussion on managing symptoms of the "flu".**
- Because influenza is a virus, it **is not** treated with antibiotics.
- Q: Can influenza be life threatening?  
A: YES. Most people who die are older than 65, but many of those who are hospitalized are younger than 5. Children hospitalized because of influenza usually have high fever with dehydration or wheezing, croup or pneumonia.
- We do have vaccines available to protect against this disease. (The vaccines only help to protect against the influenza virus and not the many other winter viruses.) It is approximately 80% effective in preventing the flu illness for this season.
- **The "Flu" vaccine is recommended for all children & adults, but is very strongly recommended for children with long-term health problems including:**
  - Heart Disease -
  - Asthma/Recurrent Airway Disease or Recurrent Bronchitis -
    - Metabolic Diseases (such as Diabetes) -
  - Those who have a diagnosis of a weakened immune system -
    - Children on chronic aspirin therapy -
    - Lung, Kidney or Liver Disorders -
    - Severe Cerebral Palsy or Seizure Disorders -
    - Anemia and other blood disorders -
  - Cognitive dysfunction, History of Spinal Cord injury -
    - Neuromuscular Disorders -
- **The flu vaccine is also highly recommended to all children 6 months to 5 yrs., to reduce the spread of disease in homes & communities and reduce the incidence of hospitalizations.**
- We prioritize the scheduling of appointments for the groups of children listed above. Nurse Visits can be scheduled for these children and any siblings. If you have a well-child visit due or scheduled in October, November or early December, then they can receive the vaccine at that time instead of making a separate nurse visit appointment.
- Children who do not fall into any of the priority groups above can receive the flu vaccine at their well child visits or re-check visits during the months of October, November, and December, or can schedule nurse visits for November and December.

There are **two** types of vaccines for influenza.

- The "inactivated" vaccine (injection-shot) is made by growing the influenza viruses in eggs, purifying them, then inactivating them with the chemical formaldehyde. This vaccine can cause muscle aches and low-grade fever. If your child has been diagnosed with Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder, then they may also be eligible for the thimerosal-free vaccine. All children 6 months to 3 years of age receive the thimerosal-free type of the vaccine as well.
  
- The "live, weakened" vaccine, nasal-Flumist, is also made by growing the viruses in eggs and is given as a nasal spray and can cause some congestion and runny nose. The nasal spray can be given to children older than 2 years of age, except in patients with known chronic respiratory disease (i.e. Asthma). It cannot grow in the lungs, but can grow in the lining of the nose, so it can induce an excellent protective immune response.

Contraindications to receiving either vaccine include: \*having a severe allergy to eggs, \*having had a serious reaction to influenza vaccine in the past, \*a history of Guillain-Barre' Syndrome, \*children less than 6 months of age, \*and/or having a current fever on the day of proposed vaccine administration.

Children less than 9 yrs. of age who have never received an influenza vaccine require two doses for optimal protection.

09/21/2011