

Flu



Children's
of Alabama®

1600 7th Ave S • Birmingham, AL 35233 • 205.638.9100

Sometimes mistaken for the common cold, the flu (influenza) causes more symptoms and can sometimes cause serious illness. Fortunately, most kids who get the flu can get over the infection without any problems. The flu occurs most often in the winter months.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Loss of appetite
- Sore throat
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dizziness
- Chills
- Muscle aches
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Diarrhea
- Tiredness

What to Do:

- Call the child's doctor
- Encourage rest
- Keep the child hydrated with plenty of fluids – breast milk or formula for babies; water, juice, ice pops, and cool drinks for older kids (but no caffeinated drinks).
- Relieve symptoms with:
 - A warm bath
 - A cool-mist humidifier
 - Saline (or saltwater) nose drops
 - Acetaminophen or ibuprofen (check package for correct dosage)

Never give aspirin to a child with the flu. Do not give cough or cold medicine to children under 6 years old (call the doctor first for older kids).

Seek medical care if the child has:

- Symptoms that get worse
- Trouble breathing
- A stiff neck
- A severe cough
- A fever and is 3 months or younger
- A headache that doesn't go away after taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen

Seek Emergency Medical Care if the child:

- is working to breathe ("using chest muscles to get air in and out")
- is lethargic (hard to wake up your child)
- child is confused and unsteady
- physician recommends coming to the ED

Think Prevention!

- Get the flu vaccine each year
- Try to avoid large crowds during flu season
- Wash hands well and often



Flu Testing and Treatment

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Testing for the Flu

- Getting a flu shot each year is the best way to protect your child from the flu.
- Most of the time doctors will use the symptoms your child has to diagnose your child with flu.
- Occasionally, a rapid flu test is used to see if your child has the flu. But many children with the flu have a negative test and children without the flu will sometimes have a positive test so your medical provider today will decide whether or not a flu test is needed.
- If a flu test is done, a nasal swab is needed for the test and it will take about an hour to get results.

Treatment for the Flu

- The best treatment of the flu involves rest and lots of fluids.
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin) for fever. NEVER give aspirin to a child with the flu.
- The flu is a virus and cannot be treated with antibiotics.

Tamiflu

- Tamiflu is a medicine that may be given after a positive flu test.
- Some side effects of Tamiflu are nausea and vomiting.

Who should get Tamiflu?

- Not every patient with the flu will get a prescription for Tamiflu. Only children with a higher than average risk for complications of flu will be treated with the medication.

If your child has the flu but is not given Tamiflu, the best treatment is still to get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, and take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin) as needed for fever or pain.

When should I call the doctor?

- Symptoms that get worse
- Severe cough
- Trouble breathing
- Fever in a child that is 3 months or younger
- Stiff neck
- Headache that doesn't go away after acetaminophen or ibuprofen