



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Preschool Flu Prevention

Impact of Requiring Influenza Vaccination of Children Attending Licensed Childcare or Preschool Programs — Connecticut, 2012–13 Influenza Season

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

In the U.S., many young children go to day-care centers and preschools. These environments put them at higher risk for influenza, including potential serious complications, such as hospitalization and even death. An annual flu vaccine is recommended for all children six months and older.

Dr. Erin Kennedy is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of getting your preschooler vaccinated against influenza. Welcome to the show, Erin.

[Dr. Kennedy] Thanks for having me, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erin, are children at higher risk for severe illness if they get the flu?

[Dr. Kennedy] They are, Bob. Flu can make anyone sick and be a serious illness. However, young children under the age of five, and particularly under two years of age, are at high risk for severe illness. These illnesses can cause missed school, missed activities, hospitalization, and even sometimes death.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can parents do to protect their children from influenza?

[Dr. Kennedy] Well, the most important step in protecting anyone against the flu, including children, is to get a flu vaccine each season. Because children under the age of five are at high risk for flu complications, it's even more important to get them vaccinated. Also, children younger than six months cannot get a flu vaccine, therefore it's very important to vaccinate those around them—parents and caregivers of these children should be vaccinated each year.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erin, what advice do you have for parents who may be concerned about the flu vaccine?

[Dr. Kennedy] What I tell parents is the vaccine is very safe and has been used for over 50 years. It is also the *best* protection against influenza. What we commonly hear is that people think the vaccine causes the flu. The flu vaccine cannot cause influenza.

[Dr. Gaynes] What time of year should children get vaccinated against the flu?

[Dr. Kennedy] It's best to get vaccinated as soon as vaccine becomes available. However, flu viruses circulate well into the spring and it's never too late to be vaccinated.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erin, where can listeners get more information about the influenza vaccine?

[Dr. Kennedy] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/flu.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Erin. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Erin Kennedy about the importance of vaccinating your preschooler against influenza.

Remember, an annual influenza vaccination is the most effective way to avoid the flu, a potentially dangerous illness for young children. Talk to your child's health provider about getting the flu vaccine.

Until next time, be well. This is your host Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.