

## Your Child, Chronic Disease and

# THE FLU

**Does your child have a chronic disease, such as diabetes or asthma? If so, the flu (influenza) is more dangerous for your child.**

### Why?

All children can get very sick from the flu. Your child is at an even higher risk of getting seriously ill due to his or her chronic disease.

- ▶ Your child's body can become too weak to fight off the flu.
- ▶ The flu can make your child's chronic disease more serious. For example, a child with diabetes who gets the flu may develop very dangerous blood sugar levels.

To protect your child from the flu, he or she needs to get the flu shot, not the nasal-spray flu vaccine.

### Is the flu a serious disease?

Yes. The seasonal or annual flu is a virus that affects the lungs, throat, nose and other parts of the body. Unlike the common cold, the flu comes on suddenly, makes you very sick for a week or longer, and it can send you to the hospital.

When a sick person coughs or sneezes, tiny droplets fly through the air. You can get sick from the droplets if they land in your nose, eyes, or mouth. You can also get the flu by touching a surface like a table or a doorknob that has flu virus on it, then touching your mouth or nose.

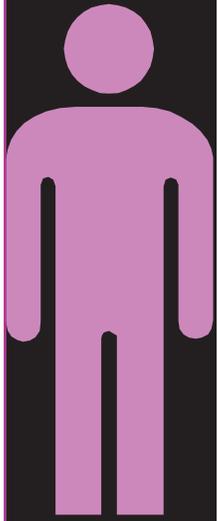
Children can get the flu from other people even when others don't look or feel sick. Keeping your child away from people who look sick is not enough protection.

Each year in the United States, over 23,600 people die from the flu.

### Why should my child get the flu shot?

- ▶ To save your child's LIFE. Because he or she has a chronic disease, your child's risk of death and serious illness from the flu is higher than it is for most people.
- ▶ To save time and money. Your child will miss fewer activities and days of school due to illness. Also, you will miss fewer days of work due to your child's illness.

The flu vaccine is quick, easy and safe protection. ....▶



## Can the flu shot give my child the flu?

No. This is not possible, because the shot is made with only dead flu virus.

## Is the flu shot safe?

The flu shot is very safe; its benefits far outweigh any possible side effects. Some people may have redness and soreness where they received the shot, but other side effects are rare.

## Does my child need to get the flu shot every year?

Yes. The flu virus changes every year, so the flu shot must change too. Because your child has a chronic disease, he or she should be among the first to get the flu shot in the fall.

## Should my child's friends, family, and other close contacts get the flu shot, too?

Yes. Everyone can get the flu. When the people around your child get the flu shot they not only protect themselves, they are also less likely to spread the flu to your child. Your child's close contacts may be able to get the nasal-spray flu vaccine. Nasal-spray vaccine is approved for people ages two through 49 who are not pregnant and who do not have certain health conditions. If you are considering the nasal-spray vaccine, you should check with your doctor to see if it is right for you.

## Should my child get a pneumococcal (pneumonia) shot?

Yes. Just as your child is at a higher risk for the flu, he or she is also at higher risk for pneumonia. Pneumonia is a serious complication of the flu and it can be life threatening. Unlike the flu shot, your child should get the pneumococcal shot only once or twice in his or her lifetime.

## How can my child get the seasonal flu and pneumococcal (pneumonia) shots?

Talk to your child's doctor or contact your local health department.

For more information about the flu shot, visit:

<http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/>

Or, visit the New York State Department of Health's flu clinic locator during flu season.