



Fact Sheet: School-based Flu Vaccine Clinics

Q. What is influenza (flu)?

A. The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. **The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year.**

Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious flu complications.

Q. How does the flu spread?

A. Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Q. What can I do to prevent my child from getting the flu?

A. Maine CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season. The vaccine can protect you from getting sick from these three viruses or it can make your illness milder if you get a different flu virus. In addition, everyday preventive steps like frequent hand washing can decrease your child's chances of getting the flu.

Q. Why are children getting vaccinated at school?

A. School clinics provide an opportunity for more children to be vaccinated, which makes for a safer and healthier school environment. While adults usually have many places to get flu vaccine (work, pharmacy, community clinics, etc) there are fewer opportunities for children outside of their healthcare providers' office. Children who receive flu vaccine are much less likely to get the flu and miss school.

Q. What are the advantages of having my child vaccinated at a school-based clinic?

- **The vaccine is free:** There is no fee for the vaccine and no fee or copayment for an office visit. The clinic provider may ask for your insurance information and permission to bill MaineCare. Some providers may ask for a vaccine administration fee (up to \$14.37), but **no child will be denied vaccine because they do not pay.**
- **Parents do not need to miss work:** If your child is vaccinated at the school-based clinic you may not need to attend. In 2009, 75% of school clinics did not require parent attendance. Consent forms were provided by parents ahead of time. Some schools (mostly those that offered vaccine outside of normal school hours) did require parent or guardian attendance. Please check with your school to see if parent attendance is required.
- **Students do not need to miss school:** If your child is vaccinated in the school-based clinic, he or she will not need to be taken out of school or miss after-school activities for an appointment with your usual health care provider.
- **Vaccine administration information will be available to your usual health care provider:** Information on this vaccination will be entered into the State's Immunization Registry for your usual health care provider to track childhood immunizations.