



People with Asthma are at an Increased Risk for Complications from Influenza

Influenza season can start as early as September. With school back in session, germs are spreading which can increase your family's risk of [influenza](#) (flu). People with asthma are not more likely to get the flu, however people with asthma are at an increased risk of complications from the flu. If you have asthma, your airways are more sensitive. The flu virus targets the respiratory system causing further inflammation that can trigger worsening of asthma symptoms or an asthma episode. The flu can also lead to pneumonia; people with asthma are more likely to develop pneumonia after having the flu and are at a higher risk of being hospitalized.

If you have asthma, fight the flu with these simple steps:

- 1. Flu Vaccine: Everyone with asthma who is six months and older should get a [flu vaccine](#) to protect against getting the flu.**
 - Vaccination is the first and most important step in protecting against influenza. Even if you don't have a regular doctor or nurse, you can [find a flu shot near you](#).
 - People with asthma should get flu vaccine made with inactivated (killed) flu virus in the 'flu shot' not the nasal spray "FluMist[®]" vaccine.

- 2. Prevent the Flu: Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of flu:**
 - Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care. Stay away from other people who are sick.
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw the tissue away. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder not your bare hands.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing;
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth (germs are spread that way).
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill.

- 3. Have an Asthma Action Plan: Follow an updated, written [Asthma Action Plan](#) developed with your doctor.**
 - a. Follow this plan for daily treatment to control asthma long-term and to handle worsening asthma symptoms.
 - b. Your child's school and/or daycare center should have an updated, written Asthma Action Plan on file and they should have access to your child's rescue medication.

- 4. If you do get sick with flu symptoms, call your doctor and take flu [antiviral drugs](#) if your doctor recommends them.**
 - a. Start the antiviral drug treatment within 48 hours after symptoms start.
 - b. Antiviral drugs can make your flu milder and make you feel better faster because the medicine fights against the flu by keeping flu viruses from making more viruses in your body.

The Enhancing Asthma Care Project is supported by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas, through their Healthy Kids, Healthy Families initiative, and lead by the American Lung Association in Greater Chicago, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. This joint initiative aims to work with 15 clinics that serve high-risk populations to improve pediatric asthma care to an estimated 30,000 children.