

# Protect Kids with Special Health Care Needs:

## Talk to Parents and Caregivers About the Flu Vaccine

You can help protect your pediatric patients from the flu by **taking every opportunity to recommend the flu vaccine**. Children and teens with special health care needs are at higher risk for serious complications and hospitalization from the flu — so it's especially important for them to get vaccinated.

**Use these talking points to guide your conversations with parents and caregivers.**



### Make a strong case for the flu vaccine

- “Because [patient’s name] has [condition], the flu is very dangerous for them. If they get the flu, it could lead to very serious health problems.”
- “It’s important for us to do everything we can to protect [patient’s name] from the flu. I strongly recommend that [patient’s name] get the flu vaccine.”

#### The flu vaccine saves children’s lives.

According to a 2020 study published in Pediatric Quality and Safety, children with special health care needs who got the flu vaccine were 50% less likely to die from flu-related illnesses.



### Reassure parents and caregivers that the flu vaccine is safe for their child

- “The vaccine is safe and effective for kids with [condition].”
- “In fact, it’s especially important for [patient’s name] to get vaccinated, because getting the flu could make them very sick.”



### Promote the benefits of the flu vaccine

- “The flu vaccine is the best tool we have to keep [patient’s name] safe during flu season.”
- “The vaccine will greatly lower their risk of getting the flu. And if they do get the flu, they’re likely to have a much milder case.”





## Explain common effects of the flu vaccine

- “The area where [patient’s name] gets the vaccine may be red and sore, and some kids may run a low fever for about 24 hours after getting the vaccine.”
- “These effects aren’t signs of the flu. In fact, they’re signs that your child’s body is building up protection — and that means the vaccine is working.”

### Consider recommending the nasal spray

Shots can be especially challenging for **children with autism, developmental disabilities, or sensory processing challenges**. Consider recommending the **nasal spray flu vaccine** if it’s available in your area and your patients don’t have contraindications.

If you recommend the nasal spray, encourage parents to check with their health insurance provider ahead of time to make sure it’s covered by their plan.



## Be ready to answer questions

Let parents and caregivers know that you’re here to answer any questions they may have. Encourage them to visit **HealthyChildren.org** to learn more about the flu and why it’s so important for their child to get vaccinated.



For more resources to help you promote flu vaccination at your clinic or emergency department, **visit [aap.org](http://aap.org)**.

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