

Promote Flu Vaccination for Pediatric Patients

Resources for Clinicians in Subspecialty
or Emergency Care Settings



Why the Flu Vaccine Matters

The flu vaccine is the best tool we have to protect pediatric patients from serious illnesses that the flu can cause. When kids with special health care needs get the flu, they're at higher risk for complications and hospitalization — so it's especially important for them to get vaccinated.

Pediatric patients with special health care needs often need a higher level of care. They're more likely to get treatment from subspecialty providers and visit the emergency department (ED). These patients include children and teens with underlying medical conditions like:

- Lung, heart, or kidney diseases
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Immune disorders
- Blood disorders
- Brain disorders
- Cancer
- Obesity
- Diabetes



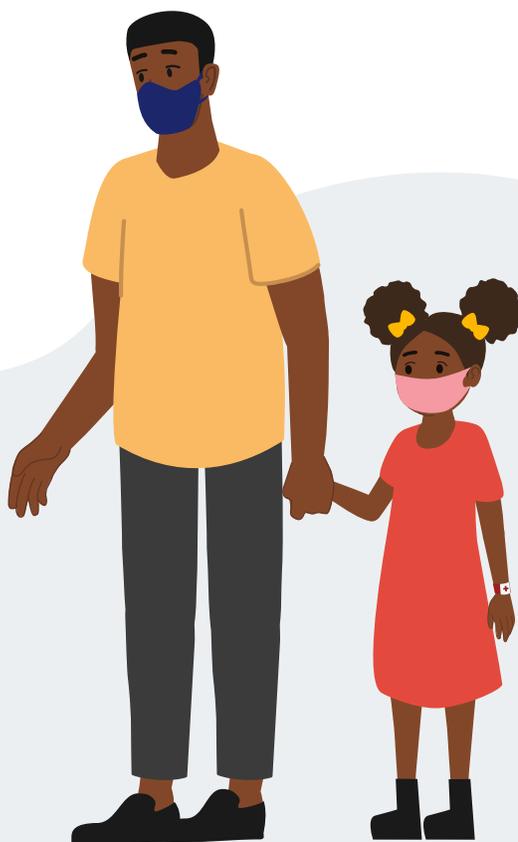
The flu vaccine saves children's lives. According to a [2020 study published in Pediatric Quality and Safety](#), children who got the flu vaccine were much less likely to die from complications of the flu. The flu vaccine reduced the risk of death by 50% for children with underlying medical conditions and 65% for children without underlying conditions.



We know the vaccine is effective — it reduces the cases of the flu, hospitalizations, and death in kids.”

— **Dr. Shannon Baumer-Mouradian, MD**
Pediatric emergency medicine physician

You can help your patients stay healthy by making sure they get the flu vaccine — this year and every year. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has created these resources to help you promote flu vaccination.



Why Offer the Flu Vaccine in EDs and Subspecialty Clinics?

By offering the flu vaccine at your clinic or ED, you can help increase the number of children who get vaccinated every year — ultimately slowing the spread of the flu. And you can reach kids with special health care needs who often miss opportunities to get the flu vaccine. According to a [2016 study published in Hospital Pediatrics](#), 42% of children who were hospitalized with flu complications missed at least 1 chance to get the vaccine.

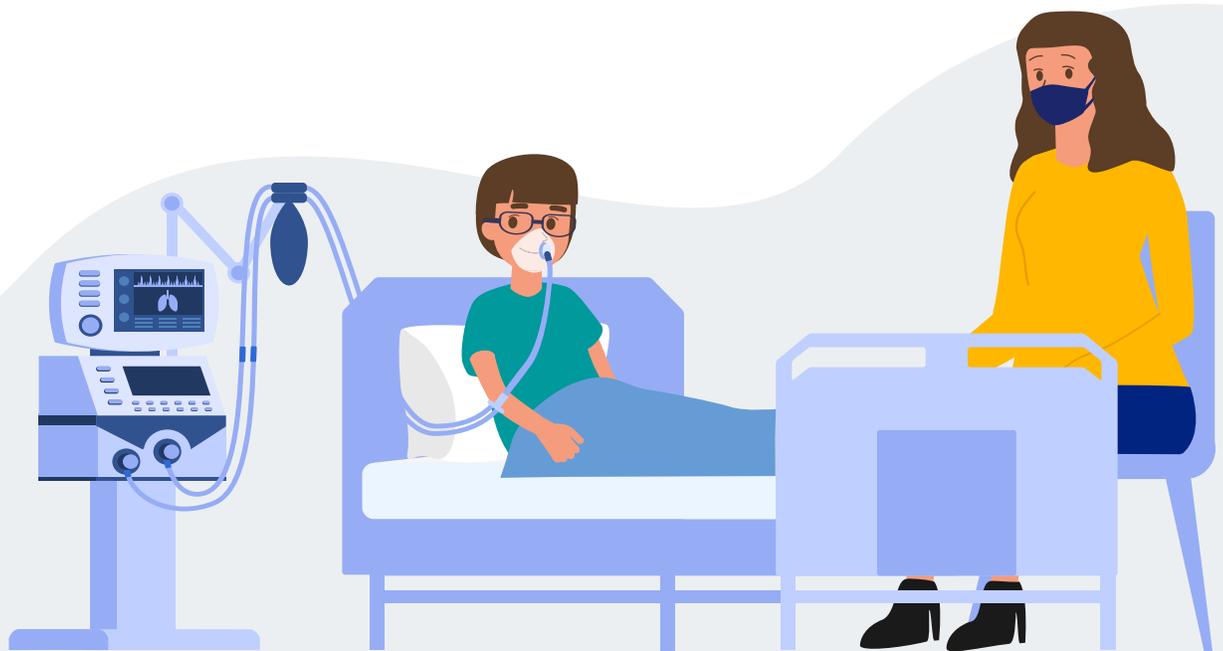
As a clinician, you can help close this gap by offering and recommending the flu vaccine in your clinic or ED. A [2020 study published in Pediatric Quality and Safety](#) found that providing the flu vaccine in the ED helped remove barriers to access and address vaccine hesitancy.



How to Promote Flu Vaccination

Protect your patients from the flu by taking 2 important steps:

- **Offer the flu vaccine** in your clinic or ED. **See page 5** for best practices to help you start a flu vaccine program.
- **Take every opportunity to recommend the flu vaccine** to your patients' parent(s) or caregiver(s). Remember, every appointment or ED visit is an opportunity to get your patients vaccinated. **See page 9** for resources to help you start the conversation.



Start a Flu Vaccine Program

If your clinic or ED doesn't currently offer the flu vaccine, consider starting a flu vaccination program. Here are some action steps to help you get started:



Build your flu vaccination team

To start a flu vaccine program, you'll need buy-in from key stakeholders at all levels of patient care. The first step is to identify everyone who will need to be involved, from clinicians and nurses who work with patients directly to finance, pharmacy, and other departments. Emphasize the importance of providing the flu vaccine to all pediatric patients — especially those with special health care needs.

If you work in a large clinic or ED, identify team members who are passionate about flu vaccination and ask them to act as vaccine champions. This team can help raise awareness about your new program and get others on board.



Design a workflow that works for you

You'll need to establish a workflow: a process that you'll follow each time you give a patient the flu vaccine. It's important to make sure that frontline workers like nurses, medical assistants, and any other staff members who interact closely with patients are involved in making decisions about your flu vaccine workflow.

Below is a sample flu vaccine workflow that you can use when patients come to your clinic or ED — whether they are specifically coming to get the flu vaccine or for another health care need. And of course you can adapt these steps to meet your patients' needs.

Sample flu vaccine workflow



It may be helpful to physically walk through the workflow to make sure you haven't overlooked any necessary steps.



Talk to your finance and leadership teams

Discuss the flu vaccine program with your finance team and identify their needs. Determine what processes they need to put in place to comply with clinical regulations. Then meet with leadership to present your flu vaccine program proposal.



Design clinical decision support tools to streamline your workflow

Clinical decision support (CDS) tools are computer programs that analyze data in EMRs to provide helpful prompts and reminders to staff. You can work with your clinical informatics or health information technology team to incorporate CDS tools into your flu vaccine workflow.

CDS tools can help you save time and simplify the process of providing the flu vaccine by:

- Identifying patients who haven't had the flu vaccine yet
- Identifying patients who qualify to receive the vaccine at no cost through the Vaccines for Children Program
- Prompting clinicians, nurses, and other staff members to discuss the flu vaccine with parents and caregivers
- Prompting clinicians to order the flu vaccine



Apply to become a Vaccines for Children site

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program is a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children whose families are unable to pay. Your clinic or ED can apply to become a VFC site. [A 2018 study published in JAMA Pediatrics](#) found that becoming a VFC site can make a flu vaccine program more cost effective or even cost neutral. [Learn more about VFC](#) and how to apply.





Test your processes

Next, confirm that the processes you've set up are working:

- Test your new CDS tools
- Test your process for patient identification, vaccine administration, and documentation
- Make sure billing and revenue are receiving correct billing information for patients



Educate your team

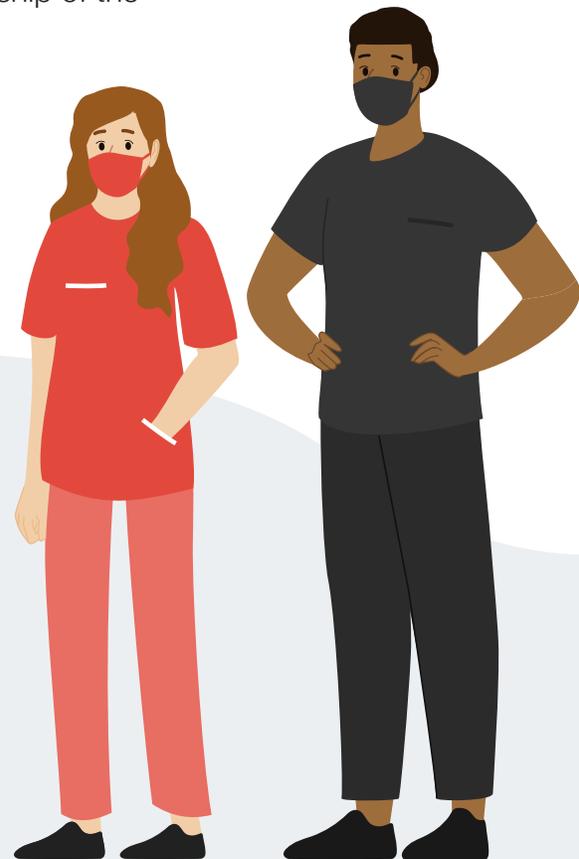
Now it's time to educate your team about the new vaccination processes you've put in place. Clearly communicate your expectations and make sure that each team member understands their role in promoting the flu vaccine. Make sure vaccination resources are easily available to everyone.



Track and celebrate your progress

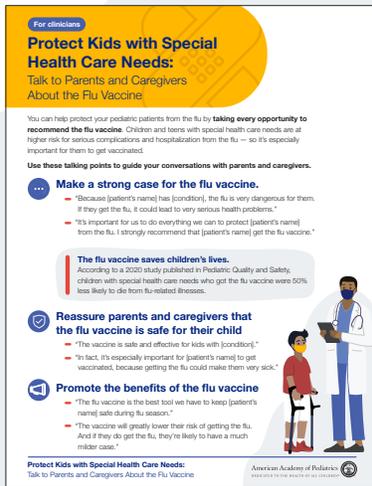
Once you've launched your flu vaccine program, be sure to track your progress. Consider monitoring metrics like how many flu vaccines your clinic or ED has given or what percentage of your patients have received the flu vaccine.

And remember to give positive feedback and recognize staff members who give the most flu vaccines. Help your team take ownership of the vaccination program and feel proud of the work they do!



Talk to Parents and Caregivers about the Flu Vaccine

It's important to **take every opportunity to promote the flu vaccine to parents and caregivers of kids with special health care needs.** Use the resources below to help you start the conversation and address any questions caregivers may have.



For clinicians
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 the risk of getting the flu. And if they do get the flu, they're likely to have a much milder case."

Protect Kids with Special Health Care Needs:
Talk to Parents and Caregivers About the Flu Vaccine

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org/flu

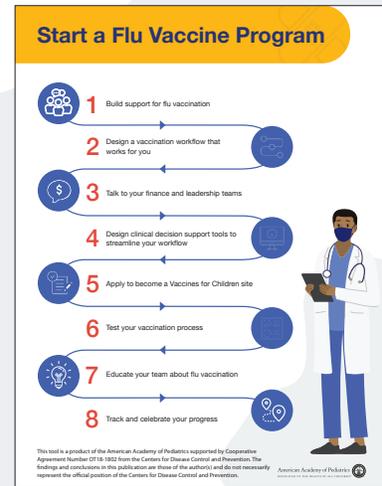


Recommend the flu vaccine at every opportunity

Help your pediatric patients stay healthy this flu season. **Take every opportunity to recommend the flu vaccine to your patients' parents and caregivers.**

- Remember, children and teens with special health care needs are more likely to have serious complications from the flu. So it's especially important for them to get the flu vaccine.

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org/flu



Start a Flu Vaccine Program

- 1 Build support for flu vaccination
- 2 Design a vaccination workflow that works for you
- 3 Talk to your finance and leadership teams
- 4 Design clinical decision support tools to streamline your workflow
- 5 Apply to become a Vaccines for Children site
- 6 Test your vaccination process
- 7 Educate your team about flu vaccination
- 8 Track and celebrate your progress

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Talking points

Use these talking points to guide your conversation when you recommend the flu vaccine to caregivers. They cover all the basics about the flu vaccine — and they'll help you address common concerns and barriers that may prevent kids from getting vaccinated.

Reminder flyers

Share these flyers around your work space to remind clinicians, nurses, and other staff members to recommend the flu vaccine.

Flu vaccine infographic

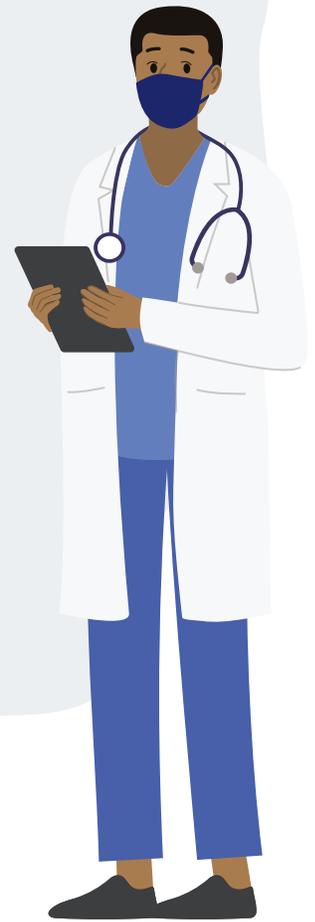
Planning to start a flu vaccine program? Use this infographic to guide conversations with your staff.



Addressing vaccine hesitancy

Keep in mind that parents and caregivers may have concerns about the flu vaccine for many reasons — that’s why it’s so important to listen and ask questions to understand each family’s situation. For example, parents and caregivers may:

- Doubt that the flu vaccine will work for their child
- Worry that the flu vaccine isn’t safe for their child because of their health condition
- Misinterpret common effects of the flu vaccine, like running a low fever and feeling tired, as symptoms of the flu
- Distrust the medical community for many reasons — including their own personal experiences, reports from family and friends, and historical mistreatment of people of color
- Put off vaccination because their child has sensory challenges that make it difficult to get shots



Explore More Resources

Check out these other helpful resources from AAP and our partners:

- [Red Book Online Influenza Resource Page \(AAP\)](#)
- [Immunizations \(AAP\)](#)
- [Provider Resources for Vaccine Conversations with Parents \(CDC\)](#)

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