

Flu is a very contagious illness caused by the influenza virus. It can affect everyone, even healthy people, and it can be very serious. The flu is more dangerous than the common cold for children. Each year *millions of children get sick with seasonal influenza and thousands of children and adults are hospitalized.* The flu causes more deaths each year than any other vaccine-preventable disease - mostly among older people, but it is also dangerous for children and young adults. People with chronic health problems like asthma, diabetes and disorders of the nervous system are also at higher risk.

Flu can be spread from person to person through the air by tiny droplets from the mouth and nose of an infected person. These droplets can be from talking, a sneeze, cough or just from breathing. People infected with the flu are most contagious in the first 3-4 days after symptoms appear, but the virus can be passed on even before the symptoms appear.

When the flu hits your household, you can feel helpless. Symptoms usually appear suddenly and may include fever or feeling feverish, chills, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, and fatigue. Most people who get the flu will recover in a week or two, but some people have more serious complications such as ear and sinus infections, pneumonia or bronchitis and worsening of chronic medical conditions. **What is the best way to help protect you and your children against the flu this season? You can start by getting vaccinated.**

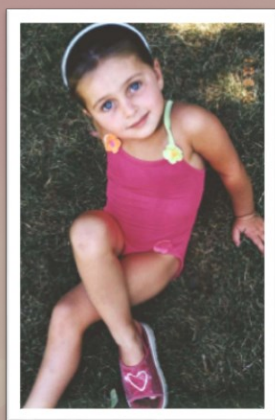
You cannot “get the flu” from the vaccine, but you may exhibit mild side effects, such as soreness or swelling where the vaccine was received, a mild fever, or body aches. While these side effects can be uncomfortable and inconvenient, they usually resolve quickly within the first 24-48 hours after receiving the shot. While flu vaccine can vary in how well it works each year, the vaccine does protect against illness and can prevent serious flu outcomes like hospitalization.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) recommends that for best protection, everyone 6 months and older should receive an annual influenza vaccine. It takes about two weeks after receiving the vaccination for the antibodies that protect against the influenza virus infection to develop in the body. It is best that people get vaccinated early in the season so they are protected before flu viruses begin spreading in their community. Babies younger than 6 months are too young to get the flu vaccine. Therefore, it is important that pregnant women, family members and anyone who cares for young infants get vaccinated to help prevent the spread of flu viruses to young babies.

A flu vaccination is needed every season for two reasons. First, the body’s immune response from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccine is needed for optimal protection. Second, because flu viruses are constantly changing, the formulation of the flu vaccine is reviewed each year and sometimes updated to keep up with changing flu viruses.

The CDC, the AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) and the Michigan Community VNA, along with Alana’s Foundation recommend getting your flu shot as soon as the vaccine is available and anytime throughout the flu season.

WHY GET FLU VACCINE? ASK THE YAKSICH FAMILY.



As extraordinary as the outcome, Alana's story is relatively unremarkable in detail.

On the afternoon of February 1, 2003, 5 1/2 year-old Alana Yaksich spent the day with her parents and brothers watching movies, eating sundaes and playing. Alana enjoyed the afternoon feeling healthy and surrounded by her friends and family.

Later that evening, Alana developed a 106-degree fever and was rushed to the emergency room. Within hours of her arrival at the local hospital, Alana died of flu-related complications that caused swelling and injury to her brain.

“

We never knew the flu could kill until Alana died.

”

- Zachary Yaksich, Alana's Dad

Alana had not been vaccinated against the flu. At the time, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention only recommended children 6 months - 23 months receive a yearly flu vaccination. Since 2010, everyone 6 months and older is recommended to receive an annual flu vaccination.

Alana's dad and family have dedicated themselves to educating people about the severity of influenza and the importance of vaccinating children against the flu every year so no family has to experience the tragedy of losing someone to a vaccine-preventable disease.

For more information, please visit:
www.alanasfoundation.org

