

# Don't Let Flu Sideline You: This Season, "Stay In The Game"

(NAPSA)—“It’s just a lightning bolt.” “It’s just a busy intersection.” These aren’t phrases you would hear from parents. But what about “It’s just the flu”?

Every parent wants to protect his or her child from dangers like lightning or busy intersections, but other misunderstood risks, like the flu, can be just as serious and just as preventable.

Between 2008 and 2010, for example, less than 20 children in the U.S. were killed by lightning. While these deaths are tragic, in that same time frame, flu claimed the lives of more than 500 U.S. children.

## Facts on Flu

Although the flu is often confused with the common cold, flu symptoms tend to develop quickly (usually one to four days after a person is exposed to the virus) and can be more severe than the normal cough and congestion of a cold. In fact, the flu can lead to serious and even fatal complications, particularly in children. Additionally, the types of viruses that cause the flu typically change from one season to the next and immunity from vaccination declines over time.

That’s why a yearly flu vaccine is so important for everyone 6 months of age and older, as recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is the single best way to help prevent getting the flu.

“After a mild flu season last year, families may have a false sense of security that the flu isn’t so serious,” explains Laura Scott, executive director of the national nonprofit Families Fighting Flu. “But for the more than 30 families in the U.S. who lost a child to the flu this past flu season, it was devastating. One death is one too many when there is a vaccine to prevent the disease.”

Members of Families Fighting Flu understand this reality all too well. Each has had a child suffer serious medical complications or



**Families Fighting Flu members have had children suffer serious medical complications or die due to flu. Some were school-age kids, while others were healthy high school athletes.**

die due to the flu. Some were high school athletes, hospitalized for weeks battling what started out as “just the flu.” Others were active school-age kids who died unexpectedly from the flu. Since 2004, the group has been working to educate others about the seriousness of the flu and the importance of annual vaccination.

## Doctor’s Advice

According to Flor M. Munoz, M.D., M.S., medical adviser to Families Fighting Flu and assistant professor, Department of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine, the flu is a leading cause of hospitalizations for children in the U.S. “Getting vaccinated protects you and your child from the flu and from passing it on, but it may also have added benefits. In pregnant women, for example, recent studies suggest that flu protection may be passed from the mom to the unborn child when the mother is vaccinated during pregnancy.”

## Where to Get Help

Flu vaccines are available in many locations, including doctors’ offices, pharmacies, schools and workplaces. The website [www.FamiliesFightingFlu.org](http://www.FamiliesFightingFlu.org) provides resources about disease prevention, including a flu clinic locator to

find the nearest place to get the vaccine and a toolkit to educate people about the importance of flu prevention. As Scott reflects, “It breaks my heart every year to see news headlines about the loss of a child due to flu. These deaths can be prevented, and that’s why we’re working to raise awareness—an annual flu vaccination is the best defense against a disease that’s not ‘just the flu’ when it happens to you or to someone you love.”

## Protect Your Family— Stay in the Game!

Here are simple steps to help your family stay healthy this flu season:

- Get vaccinated. According to the CDC, annual vaccination is safe and effective and is the single best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu.

- Wash your hands. Frequent hand washing keeps germs out of our bodies.

- Stay home if you don’t feel well. Don’t let germs spread.

- Do the elbow cough. Cough into elbows, not hands, where it’s more likely to spread germs.

- Visit [FamiliesFightingFlu.org](http://FamiliesFightingFlu.org). The website provides many useful resources, including a flu clinic locator.