



HAWAII STATE  
DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH

## School-located Seasonal Influenza (flu) Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions

### School-located Vaccination Program

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#### 1) What is the Stop Flu at School program?

- a) In the fall, FREE flu vaccine will be offered to students and staff at all participating public, private, and parochial schools.
- b) The program is voluntary for students and schools. Participation is **not** required, and the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) does not require parents to complete and return a vaccination consent form if their children will not be participating.
- c) DOH, school administrators, physicians, and health insurers agree that this FREE service will benefit the health of Hawai'i's school children, families, and communities.

#### 2) Why are school children being offered FREE flu vaccine?

DOH believes this important initiative will benefit the health of Hawai'i's school children, families, and communities.

Consider the following reasons:

- a) Nationally, school children have very high rates of flu illness, often exceeding 10 percent each year.
- b) Influenza outbreaks might be prevented or the severity of illnesses lessened if a greater proportion of students are immunized.
- c) Studies show that school children vaccinated against flu have fewer illnesses, fewer absences from school, and lower rates of illness in their families during flu season, compared with unvaccinated children.
- d) Children are one of the most important sources of flu transmission in the community. Older people often catch flu virus from children; therefore, immunizing children may also prevent illness and death in our kupuna (senior population).

#### 3) How many school children are vaccinated through the Stop Flu at School program?

Annually, over 65,000 students statewide are vaccinated through the Stop Flu at School program.

#### 4) Who can receive the free flu vaccine at school?

All elementary and middle school students, kindergarten through the eighth grade, attending participating schools, are eligible to receive the free flu vaccine. Teachers, administrators, and other paid school staff at participating schools may also receive the vaccine. All Hawai'i

public and private elementary and middle schools have been given the opportunity to participate.

**5) Can home schooled students receive the free vaccine at school?**

No. The school-located vaccination program, as designed, will be able to reach more than 98% of all children ages 5-13 years. The health of home schooled children is very important, but it is not possible to create a separate delivery system outside of the school setting. Parents of home schooled children can have their children vaccinated by their regular health care provider.

**6) Can a parent, guardian, or a younger or older child be vaccinated at school too?**

No, only children in kindergarten through the eighth grade attending participating schools are eligible for the free flu vaccines. Parents, guardians, and older or younger children may receive the flu vaccine from their regular health care provider or clinic. Adults may also receive their flu vaccine at community clinics or pharmacies statewide. A list of these clinics is available at [www.flu.hawaii.gov](http://www.flu.hawaii.gov).

**7) Are students required to be vaccinated against flu?**

Participation in the school-located program is voluntary and permission of the child's parent or guardian is required. However, parents should know that it is recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices that all children aged 6 months through 18 years of age should be vaccinated yearly against flu.

**8) Should healthy school children be vaccinated against flu?**

Yes. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends yearly flu vaccination for ALL children aged 6 months through 18 years. This recommendation should reduce the risk of flu among children, their need for health care visits, and missed time from school. Also, decreasing the spread of flu among children may reduce flu among their household members and within the community.

**9) Should children with long term health problems be vaccinated against flu?**

Yes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends giving a yearly flu shot to children with long term health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, cognitive (involving the ability to process information, as in thinking and communicating), neurologic or neuromuscular disorders, liver disease, and blood disorders.

**10) Which influenza vaccines will be available through the 2013 Stop Flu at School program?**

For the 2013 Stop Flu at School program, the nasal spray vaccine will be FluMist® Quadrivalent, which protects against *four* different influenza viruses. The flu shot will be trivalent and protects against *three* different influenza viruses. Please read the Vaccine Information Statements for further information.

**11) Why is the quadrivalent flu shot not available through the Stop Flu at School program?**

Although all of the nasal spray vaccine manufactured this year will be quadrivalent, most of the flu shots produced in 2013 will be trivalent. Because the quadrivalent flu shot is expected to be in short supply, all flu shots available through the 2013 Stop Flu at School program will be trivalent.

**12) What does a parent/guardian have to do for his/her child to get the flu vaccine at school?**

Participating is easy! Parents/guardians should:

- a) Read the Vaccine Information Statements.
- b) Choose which flu vaccine type (Nasal Spray or Shot) they want their child to receive.
- c) Complete either the online Consent Form or the paper form sent home with their child (Yellow – Nasal Spray; Green – Shot; Printed copy of online form). Note: Only **ONE** Consent Form should be completed.
- d) Answer all of the questions on the Consent Form.
- e) Print (online Consent form only), sign, date, and return the completed consent form to their child's school **by September 6, 2013**.

Forms will be sent home through the schools in August 2013.

**13) Can you tell me more about the on-line Consent Forms?**

Parents and guardians may use an on-line tool to complete their child's 2013 Influenza Vaccination Consent Form. To complete an on-line Consent Form, parents/guardians will need to:

- Go to the on-line Consent Form website: <https://vaxonlinereg.doh.hawaii.gov>.
- Select their child's school from a drop-down list.
- Enter their child's school's assigned authorization code – a list of authorization codes is available on the website.
- Choose the vaccine type (Nasal Spray or Shot) that they want their child to receive.
- Review the Vaccine Information Statement and Hawaii Immunization Registry information.
- Complete the on-line Student Vaccination Consent Form.
- **Print, sign, and date the form and return it to their child's school by September 6, 2013.**

**14) What if a student receives a flu vaccine at the doctor's office after his/her Consent Form is sent to the school?**

The parent/guardian will need to pick up the child's Consent Form from the school before the scheduled school vaccination clinic date to make sure that the child is not vaccinated.

**15) What if a student is absent when vaccinations are offered at school?**

If a student misses a scheduled school flu vaccination clinic, the parent/guardian can call the child's regular health care provider to schedule a vaccination appointment. The only way to receive a free flu vaccine through this program is at school on the scheduled clinic date. Make-up clinic dates will not be scheduled.

**16) When will the vaccine be given?**

School-located vaccination clinics will begin in October. Each participating school will have its own clinic date and time. The child's school will notify parents/guardians of the specific

clinic date. For a list of participating schools and their clinic date, go to <http://flu.hawaii.gov/SFAS.html>

**17) Who will administer the flu vaccine?**

Trained DOH personnel or DOH authorized representatives will administer the flu vaccine.

**18) Many children dislike needles or shots. Is there another way to get vaccinated?**

Yes. In addition to the flu shot, the nasal spray flu vaccine will be offered.

**19) Is DOH receiving assistance from other organizations to help make the school flu vaccination program a success?**

a) Yes. Many agencies are assisting DOH in organizing, implementing, and evaluating the school flu vaccination program, including:

- Department of Defense
- Hawai'i Department of Education
- Hawai'i Association of Health Plans
- Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools
- Hawai'i Catholic Schools
- Hawai'i's schools of nursing at Chaminade University, Hawai'i Pacific University, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, University of Hawai'i at Hilo, University of Hawai'i Maui College, Kapi'olani Community College and Kaua'i Community College
- Hawai'i Medical Reserve Corps
- University of Hawai'i at Hilo College of Pharmacy
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

b) The Hawai'i Chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians have also endorsed the program as a positive contribution to community health.

**20) What is the Hawai'i Immunization Registry?**

The Hawai'i Immunization Registry is a free service of the Hawai'i State Department of Health for people living in Hawai'i. It is a secure computer system that stores and tracks patient immunization records and makes them available to doctors, nurses, and other authorized healthcare workers. For more information, visit the Hawai'i Immunization Registry website at <http://hawaii.gov/health/Immunization/HIR.html>

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## **Flu Viruses and Illness**

**1) Are flu illnesses serious?**

Yes, they can be. All people, no matter how healthy, are at some risk of developing severe and even fatal flu infections. From 2003 to 2011, flu deaths in children ranged from 46 to 153 per year; many of these children were previously healthy and not in a high-risk group.

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## **Vaccine Safety**

**1) Are flu vaccines safe?**

Yes. A recent study of the flu shot involving more than 45,000 infants and children found the vaccine is safe in this population. This adds to past evidence of flu vaccine safety.

**2) Who should not receive the flu vaccine?**

Some children should not receive a flu vaccine or should wait. For more information, see the Vaccine Information Statement for Inactivated Influenza Vaccine 2013-14 at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/flu.html> and the Vaccine Information Statement for Live, Intranasal Influenza Vaccine 2013-14 at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/flulive.html> or talk to the child's health care provider.

**3) Could a person still get the flu after being vaccinated?**

It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop and provide protection against flu. In the meantime, you are still at risk for getting the flu. Also, the flu vaccine will not protect against flu virus strains that are not in this year's flu vaccine or other viruses that cause symptoms similar to the flu.

**4) Can someone get the flu from the flu vaccine?**

No. Flu shot viruses are inactivated, so you cannot get the flu from the flu shot. The live flu viruses in the nasal spray flu vaccine are weakened and cannot cause flu illness. Some people have reported mild reactions after receiving the nasal spray flu vaccine, such as nasal congestion and runny nose, but because this vaccine cannot infect the lungs, it cannot cause severe complications such as pneumonia.

**5) Can the flu vaccine produce any side effects?**

Yes, but they are usually very minor. The most common side effects following the flu shot include 1-2 days of soreness, redness, and swelling at the injection site. Occasionally people develop a low fever and body aches as the body's immune system responds to the vaccine.

Side effects following the nasal spray flu vaccine are also uncommon but may include runny nose, congestion, cough, headache, muscle aches, fever, abdominal pain, or occasionally, vomiting and diarrhea. When they occur, these symptoms usually last only a short time and go away on their own.

More facts about the flu vaccine can be found in the Vaccine Information Statements at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/flulive.html> for the nasal spray flu vaccine and at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/flu.html> for the flu shot.

**6) How effective is the flu vaccine?**

The ability of a flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine and the similarity or "match" between the viruses in the vaccine and those that are causing flu illness in a particular year.

**7) Should people with egg allergies receive flu vaccine?**

No. People who have a severe (life-threatening) allergy to eggs should not receive the flu vaccine at the school-located influenza vaccination clinics. Because it is made in eggs, flu vaccine contains small quantities of egg proteins.

**8) Can someone develop a serious adverse reaction from the vaccine?**

Vaccines, like any medicine, may cause severe allergic reactions, but this is very rare.

**9) Does the flu vaccine contain thimerosal?**

Some do. The nasal spray flu vaccine does not contain thimerosal. Some inactivated flu vaccines (flu shots) distributed in the United States contain a small amount of thimerosal as a preservative.

**10) Is it safe for children to receive flu vaccine that contains thimerosal?**

There is no scientific evidence of harm caused by the small amount of thimerosal in vaccines. The following websites provide additional information: US Food & Drug Administration (<http://www.fda.gov/cber/vaccine/thimerosal.htm#t1>) or CDC (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Concerns/thimerosal/index.html>).

**11) Why do you need to get vaccinated against the flu every year?**

Flu viruses change from year to year, so you can get the flu many times during your lifetime. The immunity (natural protection that develops against a disease after a person has had that disease) that you develop from having had the flu in the past does not protect you from new flu strains. Also, each year's vaccine is made specifically to protect against flu virus strains that are most likely to cause illness during that year.

## **Consent Form Questions**

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**1) The "Consent for Child's Vaccination" section of the consent form says that the Flu Nasal Spray should not be given within 4 weeks of a measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) or varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, and to inform the child's doctor that the child will be receiving a Flu Nasal Spray vaccine at school between October – December 2013. Why?**

- a) The Nasal Spray Flu vaccine should not be given within 4 weeks of a MMR or varicella vaccination to ensure the child's immune system develops appropriate immunity against these diseases. If these live weakened virus vaccines are given too close together in time, the child may not develop immunity in response to the second vaccination. Flu shots (injectable vaccine, which contains inactivated virus), however, may still be given, regardless of when the child receives a MMR or varicella vaccination.
- b) If you have questions or concerns about this recommendation, please contact the child's health care provider.

**2) The "Dear Parents" letter says children age 8 years and younger who are receiving the flu vaccine for the first time need a second dose. Since there will be only one clinic per school, where can a child receive his/her second dose of flu vaccine?**

If a child needs a second dose of flu vaccine, please schedule an appointment with his/her health care provider. If a child does not have a regular health care provider, please contact the Public Health Nursing Clinic or a Community Health Center.