



## HAWAII STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

### Stop Flu at School Frequently Asked Questions

#### School-located Vaccination Program

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

- a) FREE flu vaccine will be offered to students at participating public schools.
- b) The program is voluntary for students and schools. Participation is **not** required, and the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) does not require parents to complete and return a vaccination consent form if their child will not be participating.
- c) DOH, school administrators, physicians, and health insurers agree that this FREE service will benefit the health of Hawaii'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 Hawaii'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 common 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) 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. The Stop Flu at School program is made available to all elementary and intermediate public schools in Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii Counties and selected public schools on Oahu.

Oahu eligibility criteria include public schools which in previous years had at least 40 percent of their student enrollment participating in the Department of Education's Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program. All neighbor island public schools are eligible to participate as access to healthcare in those counties can often be a challenge. Because of limited funding and resource constraints, free flu vaccines are no longer offered to private schools.

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

No. 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 as part of this program. Parents of home schooled children can have their children vaccinated by their regular health care provider.

**5) 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 health care provider or clinic. Adolescents and adults may also receive their flu vaccine at community clinics or pharmacies statewide. To locate a vaccinating pharmacy, visit <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/vaccines-immunizations/vaccine-locators/>.

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

Participation in the Stop Flu at School 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.

**7) 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.

**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 vaccine will be available through the Stop Flu at School program?**

Only the flu shot will be offered through the Stop Flu at School program. The vaccine is quadrivalent and protects against *four* different influenza viruses.

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

Participating is easy! Parents/guardians of children attending participating schools should:

- a) Read the Vaccine Information Statement.
- b) Complete either the online consent form or the paper consent form sent home with their child. Note: Only **one** consent form should be completed.
- c) Answer all of the questions on the consent form.
- d) Print (online consent form only), sign, date, and return the completed consent form to their child's school by the consent form due date.

**12) Can you tell me more about the online consent forms?**

Parents and guardians may use an online tool to complete their child's influenza vaccination consent form. To complete an online consent form, parents/guardians will need to:

- Go to the online 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.
- Review the Vaccine Information Statement and Hawaii Immunization Registry information.
- Complete the online student vaccination consent form.
- **Print, sign, and date the form and return it to their child's school by the consent form due date.**

**13) 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.

**14) 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.

**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?**

Clinics will be held from October through November. Each participating school will have its own clinic date and time. Participating schools will notify parents/guardians of their specific clinic dates. For a list of participating schools and their clinic dates, go to <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/about-us/programs/stop-flu-at-school/>.

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

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

**18) 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
  - Hawaii Department of Education
  - Hawaii Association of Health Plans
  - Hawaii Medical Reserve Corps
  - U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- b) The Hawaii 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.

**19) What is the Hawaii Immunization Registry?**

The Hawaii Immunization Registry is a free service of the Hawaii State Department of Health for people living in Hawaii. 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 Hawaii Immunization Registry website at <http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/about-us/programs/hawaii-immunization-registry-hir/>.

**Vaccine Safety**

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

Some children should not receive a flu vaccine. For more information, read the Vaccine Information Statement at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/flu.pdf> or talk to the child's health care provider.

**2) 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.

**3) 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.

**4) 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.

More facts about the flu vaccine can be found in the Vaccine Information Statement at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/flu.pdf>.

**5) 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.

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

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

**7) 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.