

Influenza Vaccine Requirement for Childcare Attendance for Children 6 months of age or older

Updated December 22, 2020

Beginning in the fall of 2020, influenza vaccine will be required for all children attending childcare who are 6 months of age or older. Influenza vaccine is always important to receive to reduce the risk of getting sick with the influenza, reduce the severity of disease if one does get sick (including the risk of hospitalization) due to influenza, as well as preventing the spread of influenza to others. During the COVID-19 pandemic, influenza vaccine will be especially critical to reduce the overall impact of respiratory illness on the population, protect vulnerable populations from severe illness, and decrease the overall burden on the healthcare system.

Which children need to receive influenza vaccine?

All children attending childcare who are 6 months of age or older will be required to receive influenza vaccine for the current influenza season for childcare attendance unless they have a medical or religious exemption.

When do children need to receive influenza vaccine?

Children must receive influenza vaccine for the current flu season (i.e., school year 2020-2021) by February 28, 2021.

Are there any exemptions to receiving influenza vaccine?

Medical and religious exemptions are allowable in the state of Massachusetts. Medical exemptions must be renewed annually and include a statement from a physician stating that the vaccine is medically contraindicated for the student.

What type of influenza vaccine can children receive?

Any age-appropriate licensed influenza vaccine for the current season fulfills the requirement. Influenza vaccine is not recommended or licensed for children less than 6 months of age.

Should children without a documented dose of seasonal influenza vaccine be excluded from childcare on January 1st?

Address questions about enforcement of immunization requirements with your legal counsel. We encourage childcare providers to work with families and healthcare providers to satisfy the requirements for children who are not compliant on January 1st. For the 2020-2021 school year **only**, influenza vaccine must be received by February 28, 2021. Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to work with families and healthcare providers

to satisfy the vaccination requirements for students who are not compliant by March 1, 2021.

What about children who enroll after December 31?

Children who enroll before March 31 must have a documented dose of influenza vaccine for the current influenza season (along with all other required vaccinations) when they start childcare.

What about children who enroll later in the spring?

Children enrolling after March 31 are not required to have a dose of influenza vaccine for enrollment.

Will my program have to report the number of children who received influenza vaccine in the preschool/childcare immunization survey?

Yes, there will be a survey to report influenza vaccination rates for children in childcare. The timing and details of the survey are still being developed. More information will be available soon.

Will influenza vaccine be required every year?

Influenza vaccine is now a required vaccine for childcare attendance and will be required as of December 31 for all children 6 months of age or older attending childcare each year. For school year 2020-2021 **only**, seasonal influenza vaccine must be received by February 28, 2021.

Are 2 doses of influenza vaccine required for some children, according to ACIP guidelines?

Children younger than 9 may need two doses of influenza vaccine depending on the number of influenza vaccines they've received in the past. Children should be vaccinated according to ACIP recommendations but only one dose of influenza vaccine is required for childcare attendance.