



HAWAII STATE  
DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH

## School-based Seasonal Influenza (flu) Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions – School Administrators

### 1) Why vaccinate children against influenza (flu) in schools?

The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) believes this important initiative will benefit the health of Hawaii's school children, families, and communities.

Consider the following:

- School children have very high rates of flu illness, exceeding 10% in most years.
- Influenza outbreaks might be averted if a greater proportion of students are immunized.
- 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.
- 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.

### 2) How many school children were vaccinated during the 2007-08 “Stop Flu at School” program?

Last year, over 60,000 students statewide were vaccinated through the “Stop Flu at School” program.

### 3) Do medical authorities recommend flu shots for school age children?

Yes. Recently the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended yearly flu vaccination for ALL children age 6 months – 18 years, beginning in Fall 2008. This new recommendation should reduce the risk of flu among children, their need for doctors' 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.

### 4) When will the school flu vaccination program begin?

Flu vaccination clinics will be scheduled from October through December 2008.

### 5) Who is eligible for the FREE flu vaccine at school?

All students age 5-13 years, attending kindergarten through middle school, are eligible to receive the free flu vaccine at school. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff may also receive the vaccine. All Hawaii public and private schools will have the opportunity to participate.

### 6) What do I have to do if I would like my school to participate?

A participation form was sent to all schools, and all schools should have notified DOH whether they will be participating this next year. If your school has not and would like to participate, please contact DOH at (808) 586-8300 immediately.

- 7) Assuming my school has opted to participate, what do we do now?
- Identify dates from October through December 2008 when a clinic **cannot** be held at your school.
  - Schedule a clinic date with DOH.
  - Distribute and collect parent/guardian consent forms from students when they become available from DOH.
  - Distribute and collect faculty/staff consent forms when they become available from DOH.
  - Identify a large location at your school for DOH workers to set-up and run the clinic.
  - Notify students' parents of the clinic date and time.
  - Escort participating students to and from the clinic site on the day of the vaccination clinic.

**8) How long will the vaccination clinic last?**

This will depend upon the number of students participating at your school. In general, clinics should last approximately 4 hours (including ½ hour set-up and clean-up).

**9) What resources are available to help explain the program to students and their families?**

DOH will provide:

- A brief 2 minute video for students and parents. This DVD can be shown on closed-circuit TV district- or school-wide or at parent-teacher meetings.
- A frequently asked questions flyer explaining the flu vaccination program.
- A hotline parents and caregivers can call for more information (Aloha United Way's 2-1-1)

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

No. Participation in the school-based program is voluntary and permission of the child's parent or guardian is required. However, parents should know that it is now recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices that all children age 18 years and younger should be vaccinated yearly against flu (see Question #3 above).

**11) What if a student is absent when vaccinations are offered?**

Students who miss a scheduled school flu vaccination clinic can call their regular health care provider to schedule a vaccination appointment. However, the only way to receive a free flu vaccine through this program is at school. Make-up clinic dates will not be scheduled.

**12) Who will administer the vaccine?**

Trained DOH appointed personnel will administer the flu vaccine.

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

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

**14) 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 prior evidence of flu vaccine safety.

**15) What organizations have partnered with DOH to make the school flu vaccination project a success?**

Many other agencies are assisting DOH in organizing, implementing and evaluating the school flu vaccination project including:

- Hawaii Department of Education
- Hawaii Association of Independent Schools,
- Hawaii Catholic Schools
- Hawaii's schools of nursing at Hawaii Pacific University and the University of Hawaii
- Hawaii Medical Services Association
- Kaiser Permanente Medical Center
- U.S. CDC

Others have endorsed the program as a positive contribution to community health including the Hawaii Chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians.