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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Protecting Against the Flu:

Advice for Parents and Caregivers of Children Less Than Six Months Old

Children less than two years old more likely than older children to end up in the hospital with complications if they get influenza (the flu). Complications can include pneumonia, dehydration, worsening of long-term health problems like heart disease or asthma, encephalopathy (a disease of the brain), sinus problems and ear infections. And in rare cases, complications from the flu can lead to death.

Because children are at increased risk of complications from influenza, all children older than six months should get a flu shot. Flu shots are not approved for children less than six months. Also, antiviral medications (drugs used to treat and prevent the flu) are not approved for children younger than six months. Because these infants cannot get a vaccine or antiviral medications – but are at higher risk for serious flu-related complications – safeguarding them from influenza virus infection is especially important. *Here are ways to help protect children less than six months from the flu.*

Get Vaccinated - If you live with or care for an infant less than six months of age, you should **get a flu shot**.

Protect yourself and your infant from influenza and other respiratory illness by following these steps:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze – then throw the tissue away after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based cleaner, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Keep yourself and your baby away from people who are sick as much as you can.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth since germs can spread this way.

Remember How Flu Spreads - The main way that flu spreads is respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled (up to three feet) through the air and infect someone nearby. Though much less frequent, the flu may also spread through indirect contact with respiratory droplets.

If you get flu-like symptoms - including a sudden onset of fever, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny nose or body aches, follow the precautions below:

- Check with your health care provider. (If you have influenza, your doctor may prescribe antiviral medications for you.)
- Try to minimize contact with your infant as much as possible.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, and put your used tissue in a waste basket.
- Wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub frequently and as soon as possible if you have sneezed or coughed on your hands.
- Before engaging in any activity within three feet of your infant (including feeding, changing or reading to your child), put on a surgical mask (available in most drugstores) and thoroughly wash and dry your hands. Do not remove your surgical mask until you are done and you have put your infant down.
- Take these precautions for the first seven days of your illness (beginning the first day you notice symptoms).

Be Watchful - Observe your infant closely for symptoms of respiratory illness. If your child develops a fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F orally or 102°F rectally), has respiratory symptoms or is less responsive than normal, contact your child's doctor.

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