



David E. Simai M.D.

Board Certified Pediatrician

בס"ד
660 Central Avenue, Suite #3
Cedarhurst, New York 11516
Tel. (516) 374-2228
Fax. (516) 374-2044
Email: DrSimaiPediatrics@Gmail.Com
Website: www.DoctorSimai.com

Do Not Panic – If Your Child Has the Flu

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, I wanted to share some information with you in order to avoid those nervous, anxious moments when dealing with your children.

Ask any therapist on the street, and they will tell you that even pre- Hurricane Sandy, anxiety is prevalent in our days. We live in a worried, tense society, and we are constantly bombarded with sad news and warnings. Frequent health advisories, weather advisories, breaking news and the most valuable anti terror tactic - terror alerts. It is a miracle that we can stay sane given the huge daily dose of bad news that we hear. Our schools have started to guide us regarding how to help explain the current events to our kids. Listening to the news has become a real threat to our own well being.

I must say that this is felt daily at my office. The psychological aspect of healing has become the main challenge in practicing medicine today. Therefore, I decided to take some time and discuss over the next few weeks, current common illnesses that I see at my office and how to confidently and calmly approach them.

As many of you already know, it has been a very hard Flu season thus far. We have seen dozens if not hundreds of confirmed flu cases, most of them involving the H3N2 which is the new strain of the flu virus. This is probably the reason behind the recent outbreak. Whenever a new strain of flu emerges, more people are prone to getting sick with it.

The good news is that thus far, most immunized families seem to have been protected from the circulating flu. In my practice, approximately 95% of the confirmed flu cases were in children that were *not* immunized.

The flu count for roughly 47,000 mortalities in the U.S. each year, but most of them are patients that were in *high risk* of complications.

You may wonder who the high risk patients are, so here is a quick list:

- Patients above 65 years old.
- Patients with history of heart disease, lung disease (including asthma) or strokes.
- Pregnant women.
- Cancer patients.
- Obese patients.
- Children below the age of 5
- Diabetics.
- Patients with kidney or Liver Diseases.

How to Treat the Flu?

1. **Medicine** - If your child was diagnosed with the flu within 48 hrs of their first symptom, Tamiflu therapy may be started. The medicine is given *twice* daily for 5 days to treat the sick child and can be given *once* daily for 10 days to prevent the family members from developing the illness.
2. **Hydration** – so far, the only hospitalization from the flu at my office in this season came today, when I sent a pregnant mother from my office to the ER after she had clearly been dehydrated. Children are extremely prone to dehydrate. Their small bodies do not hold large reserves of fluids and the high fevers that accompany the flu, coupled by nausea and/or diarrhea can easily tip a young child. Therefore, if your child has a high fever, do just give her Motrin and keep her in bed. Sit next to her and let her sip a sweet chamomile tea or an electrolyte drink slowly.
3. **Secondary Complications** – Pneumonia, the flu normally does normally cause a mild cough, but some patients, especially those who are asthmatics or in their first year of life, may develop full blown respiratory distress. Therefore, there are two important cues I want all parents to pay attention to:
 - A. If your infant struggles to drink his bottle – seek immediate medical attention, they are likely having respiratory distress and need immediate help.
 - B. If you here your child grunt or moan – seek immediate medical attention.
 - C. If your child's temperature is above 105 degrees – seek immediate attention.
 - D. If your child does not appear extremely ill, but has a wet, mucousy cough for more than 3 days – call for an appointment with your physician.
 - E. If your child's fever disappeared after having the flu and then returned again after 1-2 days, have him checked again.

Thus far, we have seen a few confirmed flu patients that developed a walking pneumonia, with common bacteria known as *mycoplasma pneumonia*. The parent called me because their children seemed better after a few days of having the flu and fever, but their cough persistent and even worsened. With G-d's help, they were all treated at home with oral antibiotics and fully recovered.

4. **Isolate** – I know that many of you are working parents, but in order to avoid spreading the flu, and in order to protect your child from contracting a second illness before they are fully recovered from the flu:
 - A. Keep your child home **until they have no fever for 24 hrs.**
 - B. Keep them away from **elderly grandparents** for the same period.
 - C. **Wash your kids' hands and face** with soap and water when they come home from school – to protect them as well as their younger siblings. If they have sensitive skin, use a sanitizer on their hands and moisturize their faces after washing with soap.

- D. Teach your kids to **wash or sanitize their hands before eating** and to minimize touching their eyes, noses and mouths with their fingers excessively – do not obsess with this please.

In closing, even though the flu season is upon us, it may still be worthwhile to immunize your children. The flu vaccine is safe and effective and is readily available at most office in the neighborhood. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the Flu shots to all patients, from 6months to 18 years old.

Wishing you a healthy winter season,

David Elazar Simai, M.D.