

## Pediatric Corner

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It's flu season:  
Help your family block it.

For most of us September means the beginning of Football Season. Our favorite teams are back at the Gridiron. I'm a big fan at the "Big House" as I "Go Blue" for Michigan. But whether you are a Wolverine, or around these parts a Bulldog, Yellow Jacket, or other terrifying tenacious mascot, the start of the pigskin season also means that it's time to think about your annual influenza vaccine... especially for your children.

Last year this time I wrote about whether you should use offense or defense as a strategy. Should you try and tackle the flu after it starts to run, or block it with a more offensive strategy. I'm a stitch-in-time type of guy, and thus will advise my family and patients to block, block, and block while taking on the flu this season.

### **Pull Quote:**

**"I'm a stitch-in-time type of guy, and thus will advise my family and patients to block, block, and block while taking on the flu this season."**

**Pre Season:** Before the flu arrives to your home field, send your immune system to the necessary pre-season workout. Fortunately, it's getting easier than ever. This year, as early as August, you may receive a painless spray-in-the-nose vaccine for flu prevention. Not only is the spray easier to abide than "the old shot" but, believe it or not, it's more effective and longer lasting. It's one of those rare cases where "less pain is more gain." Next year the FDA will begin recommending the nasal vaccine to children less than five and adults forty-nine or older. Should you choose to wait until then, that good old shot is still better than no preparation at all.

**During Season:** Besides vaccination, old-fashioned hand washing is the best way to avoid the flu. Children pass the flu among each other because they will often rub their noses, and then proceed to wipe their hands on doorknobs, faucet handles, or their friends. The next kid will then touch the infected object and then touch somewhere on the face, usually the eye or nose. Adults can minimize infection by washing hands carefully before meals or touching the face, especially the eyes. Unless your hands have just been washed, avoid rubbing your eyes or nose. Remember, flu virus's can last a considerable time on any surface.

**Final Down:** If you feel a flu virus has tackled you, call your doctor immediately. By the way, the real flu, caused by influenza virus, is a severe respiratory infection that often causes a high fever over 103, pneumonia, extreme fatigue, and general muscle aches. Lesser infections, including gastrointestinal symptoms, are generally another pesky virus, but not influenza, even though your grandmother calls this the flu. If you actually think you have the real flu, your doctor may prescribe an anti-viral if you catch it in the first forty-eight hours.

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