CAROLINE’S STORY: HAVING THE FLU

WHY YOU DON’T WANT TO SKIP THE FLU VACCINE

Ages 7 - 12
My name is Caroline. I live with my Mom, Dad, sister, and our dog Charlie.

This is my story about having the flu. I was only 5 at the time but I remember being scared and confused! I had never been sick before. I was in the hospital for two weeks and even missed Christmas, my favorite time of the year!

The year I was in hospital was the one year my family missed getting the flu shot. Not anymore! The flu can happen to anyone, even if you are healthy and well. That’s why we all get our flu shots as a family every single year.

This book not only tells you about my flu story, but also explains about the flu and why vaccination is so important.

Sharing my story with you is so important to me. I encourage all of you readers to make sure you get your flu shot this year and every year!

Caroline Miller
Hey, Alice, what’s wrong? You look down.

Well, Caroline, my Mom told me I have to get a flu shot after school…

...I don't want a flu shot! Or any shot for that matter.

Well, I had the flu one time and ended up in the hospital with a really serious infection!

What? Really?! I...I didn't know.

Well, have I got a story for you!
It happened when I was just 5 years old. Like you, I was healthy and active, going to gymnastics and swim practice, like, all the time!

Then one day it seemed like I had a little cold. And a couple of days later...

...I was in the hospital!

It wasn’t a cold, it was the flu, and it had caused all sorts of infections and problems in my body.

I couldn’t even breathe on my own!

I spent two weeks in the hospital and I was so scared!

The seriousness of how the flu affected Caroline isn’t a typical story, as the impact of the flu varies from one person to the next.
Thanks to some awesome healthcare professionals, I’m totally fine now.

The crazy part is, I got the flu shot every other year except that one year, and the one time that I skipped, it led to big problems!

Whoa, that is, like, super scary! Okay...the flu can definitely be worse than a cold, I get that. But... what even is the flu?

The flu is caused by a type of germ called a virus.
And look, the flu, the cold, and COVID-19 have some of the same symptoms, but the ones from the flu and COVID-19 can be worse!

When I first got sick, my parents thought it was a typical cold and I would feel better in a day. Then it got worse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMPTOMS</th>
<th>COLD</th>
<th>FLU</th>
<th>*COVID-19</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
<td>High Fever</td>
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<td>Common</td>
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<td>Aches</td>
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<td>Chills</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
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<td>Tiredness,</td>
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<td>weakness</td>
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<td>Sneezing</td>
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<td>Sometimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Mild to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>moderate</td>
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<td>Stuffy nose</td>
<td>Common</td>
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<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>Common</td>
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<td>Headache</td>
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<td>Loss of taste or</td>
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And unlike most colds, the flu can land you in the hospital, just like what happened to me.

One of the worst parts about having the flu is I felt so sick, I didn’t want to do anything!

My parents and sister were so relieved when I started to get better. But I was so scared that I would never be able to leave the hospital and get back to school, play with my friends, and swim again! And because I was in the hospital, I even missed Christmas!

*COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered virus. These are COVID-19 symptoms as of May 2020, per the Centers for Disease Control.
So, how do people get the flu?

Well, you can catch the flu from someone who is sick and coughs, sneezes, or even just talks near you.

You can also get it if you touch something that someone with the flu recently touched, coughed, or sneezed on, and then you touch your face.

Coughing  
Sneezing  
Talking

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You can even spread the flu before you notice that you're sick!

The flu can spread super-fast, especially in schools.

And if you get it at school, well, then you bring it home and it might spread to the whole family, including your grandparents, whom this disease can be really bad in!

My Mom and Dad worried that my sister might get the flu, too.

A flu shot helps make sure I don't go through the same thing again!
But, I mean, how? How does the flu shot work?

Well, the flu shot is a type of vaccine that helps to keep us from getting the flu.

You probably got a bunch of shots when you were a baby.

So how is a shot supposed to help?

Flu shots contain super tiny pieces of viruses that are killed, or contain no virus at all, so you can’t get the flu from the flu shot.

The vaccine is injected into your body so your body learns to recognize and fight it if a live flu virus ever gets in.

The flu shot helps prepare you for that season’s flu virus.

But, I mean, how? How does the flu shot work?

The flu shot is a type of vaccine that helps to keep us from getting the flu.
Cool! So, the flu shot helps my body to kick flu butt!

After the shot, you might be a little sore, have a low fever or some muscle aches. But these things shouldn’t last very long.
So, if I get the flu shot, I will never get the flu?

Not exactly. Although the goal of the flu shot is to help protect you from getting the flu in the first place, there’s still a chance you might catch it.
That's because each season there are different flu viruses, and everyone's response to the vaccine can be different.

The flu shot is made to help protect you.

And even if you do catch the flu, the flu shot helps your body to fight it, so you may not get as sick...

...and might not miss out on family, friends, school, and fun stuff. Going to the hospital was really scary for me.

Remember, even with the flu shot, it's important to wash your hands, eat healthy food, and get plenty of rest!

It's also important to cover your coughs and sneezes and avoid people who are sick.
Flu season usually starts in October and can last into May.

The best time to get the flu shot is in the fall. But even if you don’t get it then, you should get it as soon as you can after that.

It takes about 2 weeks for the flu shot to help train your body how to fight the flu.

So, you have to get the shot every year, then?

Yes, because the flu virus is always changing…

…and your body’s response to the flu shot changes over time, too. Ask your doctor for more information on this.
Question, not that it matters because of how tough and strong I am... but, do flu shots hurt?

It's just a little pinch. And this pinch may save you days or WEEKS of being sick or in the hospital!

But many people don't like getting shots. Bringing someone or something to distract them, like a video game, may help.
Thanks, Caroline, you’ve made me feel better about getting my flu shot. It may not be easy, I will likely be a little scared, but it’s worth it so I don’t have to go through what you went through!

I definitely don’t want to go through that again!