



The flu season is on its way, and local pediatricians are urging parents to take kids for a flu shot – and to get one themselves.

Dr. Andrew Reiss, who practices at Pediatric Associates and West Boca Medical Center, said the good news is that this year's flu shot is identical to last year's. So if your kids got one last year, they may only need one dose this year, instead of two.

Reiss recommends the flu mist over an injection if you can get it, just because it's more comfortable for the kids. You don't get sick from the vaccine, he said, but you can get some side effects from the mist like a runny nose and a cough two or three days later.

Palm Beach County Public Schools are not offering the vaccine this year because of funding cuts. (Read more about that in [The Palm Beach Post](#).)

But so far the vaccine is widely available at pediatrician's offices and local drugstores, sometimes for free.

The flu vaccine is covered by most insurance.

"It's all the same. It's all very reliable," Reiss said.

Himself a father of three – ages 7, 9 and 10, Reiss recommends that parents get the flu shot, too. Because once one person in the house gets it, "Everybody else in the house is going to get it."

And because there are multiple strains out there, you can get it more than once. It's typically a weeklong illness that brings a high fever, headache, sore throat, cough, congestion and body aches.

Flu season usually starts in early November. It hasn't hit South Florida yet, but it takes a couple of weeks after the vaccine to develop immunity. The peak months for flu are usually January-March.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING THE FLU

Reiss offers some other tips for keeping the flu at bay:

- Wash hands frequently, especially before you eat. Use soap and water for about 30 seconds.
- Don't touch your face, so the germs can't get into your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Keep tissues handy.
- Cough into your elbow.
- Wipe down surfaces at home and at work with disinfectant.
- If you can't wash your hands, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, which is effective at killing most germs.

TO LEARN MORE

For more on the flu vaccine, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) online.

Get more Kids' Health news, tips and local resources at [BocaParent.com](#).