

Flu vaccination rates remain alarmingly low (Broadcast)

INTRO:

SINCE THE END OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC... THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE BECOMING SICK WITH THE FLU... HAS DRASTICALLY INCREASED EACH RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SEASON. A MAJOR PART OF THAT? EXTREMELY LOW VACCINATION RATES.

TAKE VO

THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S FLU VACCINE RATE GOAL IS 70-PERCENT. HOWEVER... IN THE PRAIRIE STATE... ONLY 24-POINT-4 PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE PEOPLE HAVE RECEIVED THEIR FLU VACCINES THIS SEASON. FOR KIDS AGES 0-4... APPROXIMATELY 25-PERCENT HAVE GOTTEN VACCINATED. FOR CHILDREN FIVE TO SEVENTEEN... IT DROPS TO ROUGHLY 18-PERCENT.

DR. MUSTAFA BAKIR (**buh-KEER**) – A PEDIATRIC INFECTIOUS DISEASE SPECIALIST WITH OSF HEALTHCARE... HAS TREATED CHILDREN WHO WERE DYING FROM VIRAL ILLNESSES DUE TO NO ACCESS TO VACCINES IN HIS HOME COUNTRY OF TURKIYE.

TAKE SOT | DR. MUSTAFA BAKIR | PEDIATRIC INFECTIOUS DISEASE SPECIALIST | OSF HEALTHCARE

"As a resident, I have seen kids die from hepatitis and hepatitis B related cirrhosis (irreversible scarring of the liver) and cancer," Dr. Bakir says. "Ten years after vaccination was implemented, we have seen none if they are vaccinated."

VO TAG

IT'S NOT JUST THE FLU... HE ADDS THAT HE'S SEEN KIDS DYING FROM TETANUS IF THEY ARE NOT VACCINATED. HE'S SEEN CASES OF POLIO... WHERE SMALL KIDS WERE PARALYZED FOR LIFE. HE SAYS THESE SERIOUS HEALTH COMPLICATIONS ARE EASILY PREVENTABLE WITH VACCINATION.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Severe flu complications are much more possible in those who are unvaccinated. Dr. Bakir says one third of flu patients admitted to the hospital will develop pneumonia.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) [reports](#) that 32 influenza-related pediatric deaths have occurred in the 2025-2026 season. Among kids who were eligible for influenza vaccination, 90% of the deaths were in kids who were not fully vaccinated against the virus.

"Severe Influenza complications have been seen in the most vulnerable patients. Like older adults, kids 5 years and younger and those who have chronic diseases," Dr. Bakir says. "They should be protected. The greatest protection is provided by immunization."

To learn more about what vaccines you or your child are eligible for, or to schedule your vaccination, visit osfhealthcare.org.