Influenza (Flu) immunisation for your child in primary school years Reception to 5

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This year, all children from years Reception to year 5 at primary school are being offered a flu vaccination at their school. **ALL** children in special needs schools are eligible for the influenza immunisation.

Your child will be offered a flu vaccine that is given as a simple squirt up the nose. It is painless, very quick, and side effects are uncommon and generally mild. This vaccination programme is designed to protect your child against influenza, an illness which can cause serious complications.

By having the flu vaccination, children are less likely to pass the virus on to friends and family, especially those who may be at greater risk from flu, such as infants, elderly people or friends and relatives with a serious health condition.

Attached to this letter are answers to some commonly asked questions about flu and the vaccination.

If you need further information you can also contact us by email or telephone. Please include your child's school information when you contact us.

- Hertfordshire Immunisation Team Email: vaccinationhertfordshire@evguk.co.uk
  Phone: 01462 459 595

Please complete the enclosed consent form (one for each child, as applicable) and **return it to the school within 1 week** so your child can be given the vaccine in a timely way to protect them.
The person who has parental responsibility must sign the consent form*.

It is important to complete and return the form even if the recommended vaccination is refused. In order to improve our service, we would be grateful if you would tell us your reason for refusal.
Should you change your mind at a later date, please feel free to contact us.

Information about the vaccination will be put on your child's health records, including records at their GP surgery.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Yerby



Clinical Director
Vaccination UK

***PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY** is the person(s) with parental responsibility will usually but not invariably be the child's birth parents. A legally appointed guardian (or the local authority if the child is on a care order), or a person named in a residence order in respect of the child. Fathers who have never been married to the child's mother will only have parental responsibility if they have acquired it through a court order or parental responsibility agreement. After the 30th November 2003 unmarried fathers have automatic parental responsibility for their children if they are named on the birth certificate

Commonly asked questions about children's flu immunisation ('Fluenz')

Why should children have the flu vaccine?

Flu can be a very unpleasant illness in children causing fever, stuffy nose, dry cough, sore throat, aching muscles and joints, and extreme tiredness. This can often last several days. Some children can also get a very high fever, sometimes without the usual flu symptoms, and may need to go to hospital for treatment. Complications of flu can include a painful ear infection, bronchitis, and pneumonia – these may be severe.

What are the benefits of the vaccine?
Having the vaccine will help protect your child from what can be a very nasty illness and will also reduce the chance of others in your family getting it, especially if a family member has a serious health condition. It can also help you avoid having to take time out because you are ill, or to look after your sick child.

How will the vaccine be given?
For most children, it is given up the nose.

Who will give my child their flu vaccination?
Specially trained healthcare staff will give your child the flu vaccination.

How does the nasal vaccine work?
The nasal vaccine contains flu viruses that have been weakened. As the viruses are weakened, this means the vaccine cannot cause flu itself, but it will help your child to build up immunity, so that when he or she comes into contact with the flu virus they are unlikely to get ill.

Are there any side effects of the vaccine?
Side effects are uncommon but may include a runny or blocked nose, headache, general tiredness and some loss of appetite. The vaccine is absorbed quickly in the nose so, even if your child sneezes immediately after having had the spray, there's no need to worry that it hasn't worked.

Are there any children who shouldn't have the nasal vaccine?
Children should not have the nasal vaccine if they:

- Are allergic to eggs, egg proteins, gentamicin or gelatin
- Are currently wheezy or have been wheezy in the past week (vaccination should be delayed until at least seven days after the wheezing has stopped)
- Are severely asthmatic, i.e. being treated with oral steroids or high dose inhaled steroids
- Have a condition that severely weakens their immune system.

Also, children who have been vaccinated should avoid *close* contact with people with very severely weakened immune systems for around two weeks following vaccination. This is because there's an extremely remote chance that the vaccine virus may be passed to them.
Contact with other healthy children or adults does not need to be limited after having the vaccine.

I believe the nasal vaccine contains products derived from pigs (porcine gelatin), which means my child can't have it because of our beliefs.
The nasal vaccine contains a highly processed form of gelatin (derived from pigs), which is used in a range of many essential medicines already. The nasal vaccine provides the best protection against flu, particularly in young children.
This nasal vaccine not only helps protect your child against disease but, if enough children are vaccinated, the disease won't spread from one person to another, and so their friends and family are also protected.
Some faith groups accept the use of porcine gelatine in medical products – the decision is, of course, up to you.
For further information about porcine gelatine and the nasal flu vaccine, please go to the website below:

www.gov.uk/government/news/vaccines-and-gelatine-phe-response

Can't my child have the injected vaccine that doesn't contain gelatine?
The nasal vaccine offers the best protection for your child and it reduces the risk to, for example, younger siblings who may be too young to be vaccinated, as well as other family members such as grandparents who may be more at risk of the complications of flu.
The injected vaccine is not thought to reduce spread so effectively and so is not being offered to healthy children as part of this programme.
However, if your child is at high risk from flu due to one or more medical conditions or treatments and can't have the nasal flu vaccine because of this, they should have the flu vaccine by injection.

Has the vaccine been used in other countries?
Yes. For example, it has been used safely in America and Europe for many years where hundreds of thousands of children have been successfully vaccinated and protected against flu.