



## School Aged Flu Immunisation and Vaccination 2020/21

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. 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.

#### 2. What are the benefits of the vaccine?

The nasal spray flu vaccine will not only help protect your child against flu, the infection will also be less able to spread from them to their family, carers and the wider population.

Vaccinating children also protects others that are vulnerable to flu, such as babies, older people, pregnant women and people with serious long-term illnesses

#### 3. Why are so many children being offered the vaccine?

By offering flu vaccination to children during the autumn, we help to protect them in time for winter. As well as protecting these vaccinated children, the infection is then less likely to spread and so it helps to protect brothers, sisters and other family members and a friend, including parents and grandparents.

#### 4. My child was vaccinated against Flu last year, why do they need another vaccination?

Flu strains are different from one year to the next, so it is important to get the vaccination every year to keep your child protected.

#### 5. How will the vaccine be given?

The vaccine is given as a single spray squirted up each nostril. Not only is it needle-free – a big advantage for children – the nasal spray is quick, painless, and works even better than the injected flu vaccine.

The vaccine is absorbed very quickly. It will still work even if, after the vaccination, your child develops a runny nose, sneezes or blows their nose.

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## 6. How does the nasal vaccine work?

The nasal vaccine contains viruses that have been weakened to prevent them from causing flu but will help your child to build up immunity, so that when your child comes into contact with the flu virus they are unlikely to get ill.

## 7. How effective is the vaccine?

The flu vaccine is the best protection we have against this unpredictable virus. The effectiveness varies from year to year, depending on the match between the strain of flu in circulation and that contained in the vaccine. In the UK, the vaccine offered to children has provided good protection against flu since its introduction.

## 8. 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.

The vaccine cannot cause flu because the viruses in it have been weakened to prevent this from happening.

## 9. Why is the vaccine being given in schools and not at my GP?

National research has shown that this is best approach to giving the vaccine for school-aged children, as more children can be vaccinated efficiently and without putting pressure on other essential services

## 10. Why must consent for the flu vaccine be given by someone with 'Parental Responsibility'?

Parental Responsibility is a legal term which means

*"all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property".*

In practical terms 'Parental Responsibility' means the power to make important decisions in relation to a child. This includes consenting to a vaccination. More information on 'Parental Responsibility' can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities/who-has-parental-responsibility>

## 11. Are there any children who shouldn't have the nasal vaccine?

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Children should not have the nasal vaccine if they are severely asthmatic, (i.e. being treated with oral steroids or high dose inhaled steroids), are severely allergic to eggs or any part of the vaccine or 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.

## 12. Why do I have to tell you about my child's medical history and provide other information on the consent form?

It is very important that we know if your child has any allergies or conditions that may mean they are not suitable for the nasal flu vaccination. We have provided more details on the information we ask for in the consent form in the table below.

<b>Information to be provided</b>	<b>Why we need to know</b>
<i>Your child has asthma Your child has been wheezy in the past 3 days</i>	<i>The vaccine is not recommended for children with severe asthma or active wheezing at the time of vaccination</i>
<i>Your child has already been immunised by the GP</i>	<i>We would not routinely vaccinate your child again if they had already had the immunisation</i>
<i>Your child takes aspirin</i>	<i>Medicines containing aspirin should not be given to children for 4 weeks after the nasal flu vaccine. This is because of the risk of Reye's syndrome, a very rare but serious disease that can affect the brain and liver</i>
<i>Your child had a severe (anaphylactic) allergic reaction to any previous vaccines</i>	<i>As with any vaccine, medicine or food, there is a very small chance of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). Anaphylaxis is different from less severe allergic reactions because it causes life-threatening breathing and/or circulation problems. It is always serious but can be treated with adrenaline. The team undertaking the vaccination at the school will have adrenaline with them on the day.  <i>If your child has previously had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine it may be more appropriate that they are vaccinated in a healthcare setting.</i></i>
<i>Your child has an illness/ receives treatment that severely affects their immune system</i>	<i>The weakened viruses in the vaccine could replicate too much and cause infection</i>
<i>Your child has close contact with anyone having treatment that affects their immune system</i>	<i>Children who have been vaccinated with the nasal spray should avoid close contact with people who have very severely weakened immune systems (for example, people receiving chemotherapy or people</i>

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	<i>who have just had an organ transplant) for about two weeks following vaccination. This is because there is a very small chance of passing the weakened vaccine virus on to them.</i>
<i>Your child has a severe egg allergy</i>	<i>Most children with an egg allergy can be safely vaccinated with the nasal flu spray. The only exception is children who have a history of severe allergy to eggs which has previously needed treatment in intensive care</i>

### **13. What about my child who has a health condition that puts them at greater risk from flu?**

Children with certain health conditions, even if well managed, are at higher risk of severe complications if they get flu. These health conditions include asthma, heart, kidney, liver, neurological disease, diabetes, immunosuppression or no fully working spleen. It is therefore especially important that these children are vaccinated. If your child is under 9 years old AND has a health condition AND is getting the flu vaccine for the first time, they will need a second dose (4 weeks after the first) to make sure their immunity has fully built up. We will contact you directly to organise this.

From the age of six months onwards, children with these health conditions should have flu vaccination every year. If you have any queries or want more information about this, please speak to your GP.

### **14. I believe the nasal vaccine contains products derived from pigs (porcine gelatine), which means my child can't have it because of our beliefs.**

The nasal vaccine contains a highly processed form of gelatine (derived from pigs), which is used in a range of many essential medicines. 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. Porcine gelatine is used in vaccines as a stabiliser – to ensure that the vaccine remains safe and effective during storage. Vaccine manufacturers normally test a wide range of stabilisers and choose one that is stable, good quality and available in sufficient volume. Unlike the gelatine used in foods, the product used in vaccines is highly purified and broken down into very small molecules called peptides. 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, see [www.gov.uk/government/news/vaccines-and-gelatine-phe-response](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/vaccines-and-gelatine-phe-response)

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### **15. 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, a baby brother or sister who is too young to be vaccinated, as well as other members of the family (for example, grandparents) who may be more vulnerable to the complications of flu, therefore healthy children won't be offered the injectable vaccine.

### **16. Does the vaccine contain eggs?**

The viruses used in this vaccine are grown on hens' eggs and the vaccine may contain very small amounts of egg protein.

Children with an egg allergy can safely have the nasal spray vaccine, unless they have had a life-threatening reaction to eggs that required intensive care.

### **17. What about children who are educated at home?**

Children who are educated at home will also be offered the vaccination. This will be at a community clinic and an appointment can be booked by contacting the Immunisation team on 01275 373104 or [sirona.sch-imms@nhs.net](mailto:sirona.sch-imms@nhs.net).

### **18. My child missed the vaccine either because they were ill or not at school. Can I still get them vaccinated?**

Yes, if your child missed their vaccination, please contact the Immunisation Team on 01275 373104 or [sirona.sch-imms@nhs.net](mailto:sirona.sch-imms@nhs.net) to arrange an appointment at one of our community clinics.

### **19. I've changed my mind. What can I do?**

If you change your mind about your child's flu immunisation, please contact us immediately on 01275 373104 or email [sirona.sch-imms@nhs.net](mailto:sirona.sch-imms@nhs.net). Please note that we cannot accept any change of consent within 48 hours of the planned school vaccination clinic. However, if you now want your child vaccinated, we can arrange for them to come to a clinic on another date.

### **20. My child has already had the flu vaccine, what do I do?**

If your child has already had the flu vaccination e.g. at the GP, please contact us immediately on 01275 373104 or email [sirona.sch-imms@nhs.net](mailto:sirona.sch-imms@nhs.net). Please note it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to let us know.

### **21. Covid-19 and Flu**

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Community Children's  
Health Partnership



Flu vaccination is one of the most effective interventions we have to reduce pressure on the health and social care system this winter. We are currently seeing the impact of COVID-19 on the NHS and social care, and this coming winter we may be faced with co-circulation of COVID-19 and flu. Those most at risk from flu are also most vulnerable to COVID-19. We must do all we can to help protect them this winter.

Please be assured that we will be working with your school to ensure that we adhere to the latest government guidelines whilst delivering the Childhood Flu Programme.

## **22. Where can I get more information?**

Visit [www.nhs.uk/child-flu](http://www.nhs.uk/child-flu) for more information.