2019 edition

Flu
Primary School

Child flu vaccine

What you need to know

www.nhsinform.scot/childflu

NHS SCOTLAND

Healthier Scotland
Scottish Government

The influenza (commonly known as flu) vaccine is recommended for:

- all primary school children (vaccine given at school)
- all children in Scotland aged 2 to 5 years on 1 September 2019, and not yet in school (vaccine given at their GP practice).

Flu is very infectious and can be serious. Even healthy children can become seriously ill from flu and can spread it to family, friends and others.

Having the flu vaccine every year is the best protection available against an unpredictable virus that can cause severe illness.

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What is flu?

- Influenza (flu) is an infectious virus and can be serious.
- Even healthy children can become seriously ill from flu.
- The flu virus spreads through the air when people cough or sneeze, or by touching surfaces where it has landed then touching their eyes, nose and mouth.
- Flu can lead to complications that may result in hospitalisation or even death.
- Every year in Scotland, children are hospitalised for the treatment of flu or its complications.

Symptoms of flu

Children get similar flu symptoms to adults. These symptoms are worse than a normal cold and may include:

- stuffy nose, dry cough and sore throat
- fever and chills
- aching muscles and joints
- headaches
- extreme tiredness.

These symptoms can last between two and seven days. Some children have a very high temperature, sometimes without other obvious symptoms, and need to go to hospital for treatment.

Flu can be very serious

In some cases flu can lead to complications. These can include:

- bronchitis
- pneumonia
- painful middle-ear infection
- vomiting
- diarrhoea.

Getting flu can be even more serious for children with health conditions (for example asthma, heart, kidney, liver, or neurological disease, diabetes, immunosuppression or a spleen that doesn't work fully), and can make their condition worse.

In the worst cases, flu can lead to disability and even death.

What are the benefits of the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine helps protect your child against flu, which can be a very unpleasant illness.

It will reduce the risk of your child spreading flu to friends and other members of your family who are at greater risk from flu, such as grandparents or people with health conditions.

It can help your child avoid days spent ill in bed rather than being at nursery or taking part in day-to-day activities.

The flu vaccine helps protect your child against flu and reduces the chance of your child spreading the virus.

The flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is a painless nasal spray that is the best available protection against flu.

Where and when will my child get the vaccine?

The flu vaccine is offered to all primary school children in Scotland at school between October and December.

If your child has a health condition they are also offered the vaccine in school and no longer need to get it from your GP.

Children in secondary school are not included in the programme. If your child is in secondary school and has a health condition they can get the vaccine at their GP practice.

How is the vaccine given?

A tiny amount of the flu vaccine is given as a nasal (nose) spray into each nostril. It's not an injection. It's quick and painless and there's no need to sniff or inhale the vaccine. Your child will just feel a little tickle in their nose.

Watch a film of the flu vaccine being given to children in school: **www.nhsinform.scot/childflu#the-vaccine**

Is the vaccine safe?

Before they're allowed to be used, all medicines (including vaccines) are tested for safety and effectiveness. Once they're in use, the safety of vaccines continues to be monitored.

The nasal spray flu vaccine has been used successfully and safely for several years and millions of doses of the vaccine have been given to children in the last six years in the UK.

Will the vaccine cause any side effects?

As with all medicines, side effects to the nasal spray flu vaccine are possible but usually mild. They may include a headache and muscle aches. Some children may experience a runny or blocked nose. Less common side effects include a nosebleed after the nasal spray vaccine. These are much less serious than developing flu or complications associated with flu.

How well does the vaccine work?

The flu vaccine should start to protect most children about 10 to 14 days after they receive their immunisation.

The annual vaccine offers protection against the most common types of flu virus that are around each winter.

Over the last few years the nasal spray flu vaccine has worked very well at protecting young children against flu. It has also reduced the chance of them spreading flu into the wider community.

What if my child is ill on the day?

Your child should not have the vaccine if:

- they're very unwell (for example, with a fever, diarrhoea or vomiting)
- their asthma is worse than usual, meaning they are wheezing more or have had to use their inhaler more than they normally do in the three days before their vaccination.

Otherwise there is no reason to delay getting the vaccine.

Visit www.nhsinform.scot/childflu for a link to the full patient information leaflet.

What if my child misses their immunisation?

If your child misses their immunisation in school, please contact your local NHS Board (on the number in the letter enclosed) to find out about local arrangements for getting their vaccine at another time.

Can the flu vaccine give my child flu?

No, the flu vaccine can't give your child flu. The virus in the vaccine has been weakened so that it doesn't cause flu. It helps your child build up immunity to flu.

Children who don't get the vaccine are also not at risk of catching flu from the vaccine, either by being at school during immunisation days or by being in contact with a child who has recently had the vaccine. It is therefore not necessary to keep children off school during the period when the vaccine is being given or in the following weeks. The only exception to this would be children who are extremely immunocompromised (have a weakened immune system).

Does my child need a second dose?

Almost all children will only need one dose of the vaccine. Only certain children will need a second dose (four weeks after the first) to make sure their immunity has built up fully.

A second dose is only needed if your child is under 9 years old and getting the flu vaccine for the first time and...

Has a health condition **or** Is given the injectable vaccine

Please contact your local NHS Board (on the number in the letter enclosed) to find out about local arrangements.

Will my child be protected for life?

No, your child will need to get the flu vaccine every year. Flu viruses are constantly changing and a different vaccine has to be made every year to ensure the best protection against flu. This is why the flu vaccine is offered every year during autumn and winter.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, please call your local NHS Board on the number given in the letter enclosed. To withdraw consent, you must write to your local NHS Board. To give consent, you will need to fill in a new consent form.

Are there any reasons why my child shouldn't have the nasal (nose) spray vaccine?

An alternative injectable form of the vaccine is available for children who can't have the nasal spray vaccine. This includes children who:

- have their immune system suppressed because they are getting treatment for serious conditions, such as cancer, or if they have had a transplant
- have a serious condition which affects the immune system, such as severe primary immunodeficiency
- are taking regular high doses of oral steroids
- have had a severe reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine
- are undergoing salicylate treatment (for example taking aspirin).

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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.

The nasal spray vaccine may not be suitable for some children with **severe asthma** who regularly need oral steroids for asthma control. Your local NHS Board will explain this.

Please make sure you list all of your child's medications on the consent form. All consent forms will be checked by the school health team before the immunisation session to make sure your child can have the nasal spray.

Your school health team may need to contact you to understand more about your child's condition, so please ensure you provide a daytime telephone number on the consent form.

The nasal spray vaccine contains a small amount of **pork gelatine**. Many faith groups, including Muslim and Jewish communities, have approved the use of vaccines containing gelatine. However, it's your choice whether or not you want your child to get the nasal spray vaccine.

The nasal spray vaccine is a much more effective vaccine than the injection in children. If you don't want your child to get the nasal spray vaccine for religious reasons you may request the injectable alternative by ticking the box on the consent form.

You'll be sent a consent form for your child during every year of primary school (your child will not automatically be offered the injectable alternative – you will need to tick the box every year).

Where can I get more information?

Visit **www.nhsinform.scot/childflu** for more information.

You can also talk to your school health team, practice nurse or GP, or call the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88). The helpline is open every day and also provides an interpreting service.

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When to immunise	Diseases protected against	Vaccine given
8 weeks old	• Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and hepatitis B (HepB)	• Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/ Hib/HepB)
	• Pneumococcal disease	• Pneumococcal
	• Rotavirus	• Rotavirus
	• Meningococcal group B (MenB)	• MenB
12 weeks old	• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Hib and HepB	• Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/ Hib/HepB)
	• Rotavirus	• Rotavirus
16 weeks old	• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Hib and HepB	• Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/ Hib/HepB)
	• Pneumococcal disease	• Pneumococcal
	• MenB	• MenB
Between 12 and 13 months old – within a month of the first birthday	• Hib and meningococcal group C	• Hib/MenC
	• Pneumococcal disease	• Pneumococcal
	• Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles)	• MMR
	• MenB	• MenB
Every year aged 2 until the end of primary school	• **Influenza (flu)**	• **Flu**
3 years 4 months old or soon after	• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio	• Four-in-one (DTaP/IPV)
	• Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles)	• MMR (check first dose has been given)
11 to 13 years old	• Cancers caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) including cervical cancer (in women), and some head and neck and anogenital cancers (in men and women)	• HPV
Around 14 years old	• Tetanus, diphtheria and polio	• Td/IPV, and check MMR status
	• Meningococcal groups ACWY	• MenACWY

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This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats:

Please make sure the parents of children who speak other languages are aware of where to access these alternative formats.

www.nhsinform.scot/childflu – click Further Information to access this leaflet in many other languages including Mandarin (Simplified Chinese), Polish and Arabic.

0131 314 5300

nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net

Mandarin	提供简体中文（普通话）版本
Polish	Dostępny w języku polskim
Arabic	متاح باللغة العربية

You have rights in relation to the access and the use of your personal health information. For more information about your rights or how the NHS uses your personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, you can phone the NHS inform helpline free on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88) and ask to speak to a healthcare adviser or visit: **www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality and www.nhsinform.scot/data-protection**

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