

Trust Headquarters
Brighton General Hospital
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Email: SC-TR.fluvacc@nhs.net
www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk
Autumn Term 2016

Dear Parent/Guardian

Flu Vaccination for Children in Years 1, 2 and 3

From October 2016 all children in years 1, 2 and 3 will be offered the nasal spray flu vaccination in school. Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust will administer the vaccination in Brighton & Hove and West Sussex.

Your child will be offered a flu vaccine that is given as a simple spray up the nose. It is painless, very quick, and serious side effects are uncommon. This vaccination programme is designed to protect your child against flu which can be an unpleasant illness and, although rarely, could cause serious complications. By having the flu vaccination, children are also less likely to pass the virus on to friends and family. This will help to protect those who are at greater risk from flu including infants, older people and those with an underlying health condition.

Please complete the enclosed consent form in capitals putting your child's name and date of birth on both sides of the form (one for each child, please). Return the form to the school within **7 days** of receipt of this letter. If your child's form is returned less than a week prior to the vaccination session we may not be able to vaccinate your child on the day, they will be given information on available Catch Up Clinics. If you wish your child's consent form to be confidential please return to school in an envelope.

If you do not want your child to have this vaccination, we would be grateful if you could return the consent form to school giving your reasons for declining. This will help us in the development of the flu vaccination programme in the future.

If your child has asthma please inform the Immunisation Team by letter, including your child's name, address and date of birth, and give it to the school on the day of vaccination if:

- **Up to 14 days before vaccination they have required oral steroids or increased inhaled steroids**
- **Up to 3 days before vaccination your child has become wheezy**

Vaccination will be deferred in the above cases.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Rosanna Raven
Clinical Nurse Manager – Immunisation Team

Immunisation Team contact telephone numbers:

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Common questions about the children's flu vaccination

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 get a very high fever, sometimes without the usual flu symptoms, and may need to go to hospital for treatment. Serious complications of flu include a painful ear infection, bronchitis, and pneumonia.

What vaccine is being offered?

The vaccine is called Fluenz Tetra. It offers protection against the four strains of flu virus which are anticipated to be circulating in the UK this winter. The virus in the vaccine is live, but it has been weakened so that it cannot cause significant illness in healthy people.

What are the benefits?

Flu in children can often last several days, and can require parents to take time off work to care for them. Flu can also spread to other members of the family. In addition, reducing the circulation of flu in children helps protect the wider community, particularly those vulnerable people for whom flu can pose a serious health risk.

Is it safe?

Yes. Over the last couple of years the programme for giving children the nasal flu vaccine has been gradually introduced in the UK, with hundreds of thousands of children safely receiving the vaccine. This vaccine has also been used for many years in the United States.

What does it involve?

A quick spray of vaccine into each nostril. No needles. No pain.

Who will give my child their flu vaccination?

A team of healthcare workers led by a trained nurse will be visiting the school. The nurse will have medical authorisation to oversee the administration of the vaccine to the appropriate children

How does the nasal spray work?

The nasal spray contains viruses that have been weakened to prevent them from causing flu, but will help your child to build up immunity. When your child comes into contact with the flu virus they will be less likely to become ill.

Are there any side effects of the vaccine?

Serious side effects are uncommon. Children may commonly develop a runny or blocked nose, headache, general tiredness and some loss of appetite. This may last a few days.

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 currently wheezy or have been wheezy in the past three days (vaccination should be delayed until at least three 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 or have someone in their household who needs isolation
- have severe egg allergy. Most children with egg allergy can be safely immunised with nasal flu vaccine. However, children with a history of severe egg allergy should seek specialist advice. Please check with your GP.
- are allergic to any other components of the vaccine.*
- Children who have been vaccinated with the nasal spray should avoid household contact with people with very severely weakened immune systems for around two weeks following vaccination.

* See the website at <http://xpil.medicines.org.uk> and enter Fluenz Tetra in the search box for a list of the ingredients of the vaccine.

My child is using a nasal spray (including steroid sprays). Should they still have the vaccine?

Yes they should, nasal sprays including steroid nasal sprays are not contraindicated when having the nasal Influenza vaccination.

My child has been identified as being at high risk from flu due to a medical condition or treatment.

Please indicate if your child is considered at high risk from flu on your consent form. If your child is at high risk from flu due to one or more medical conditions or treatments but can't have the nasal flu vaccine, they should have the flu vaccine by injection at the GP Practice.

If they are having their first ever dose of nasal flu vaccine, then a second dose will need to be given by the GP. If your child has already had one dose this autumn at your GP surgery, the second dose should also be given at the GP surgery.

If you are unsure whether your child is considered at high risk from flu, please ask your GP for advice.

My child had the flu vaccination last year. Do they need another one this year?

Yes; the flu vaccine for each winter helps provide protection against strains of flu that may be different from last year. For this reason we recommend that even if vaccinated last year, your child should be vaccinated again this year.

Does the nasal vaccine contain gelatine derived from pigs (porcine gelatine)?

Yes., the vaccine does contain a highly processed form of porcine gelatine, which helps keep the vaccine stable and effective. The department of Health does not currently have a porcine free alternative available for those child in the not 'at risk categories'. Some faith groups may have concerns about this.

In 1995 a seminar held by the World Health Organisation and the Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences advised that gelatine derived from impure animals for use in medicines has been sufficiently transformed so as to make its consumption permissible.

If you would like more information on the use of porcine gelatine in the flu vaccine, Public Health England has produced guidance on this issue which can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/386842/2902998_PHE_FluPorcine_QAforParents_FINAL_CT.pdf

What if my child only has the vaccine in one nostril?

A spray in each nostril is to maximize contact with the cells in the child's nose. However a single spray does provide sufficient particles to induce an immune response from the child.

What if my child is not in school on the day?

Unfortunately we cannot offer a second visit. However, we will leave information with the school of how you can arrange to attend a community clinic. If your child needs a flu vaccination due to being in a clinical risk group where flu poses a serious health risk, contact your GP practice about having this vaccine at your surgery.

If you have any further questions, we have an email address dedicated to the flu programme which will be checked each working day. Please do not hesitate to contact us SC-TR.fluvacc@nhs.net