

The Flu Vaccine

Myth busting Factsheet



Bedfordshire, Luton
and Milton Keynes
Clinical Commissioning Groups

Children and the Flu Vaccine

Can the nasal flu vaccine give my child flu?

The nasal flu vaccine uses a live weakened influenza virus which does not cause clinical influenza. It has a good safety record and millions of doses have been given in the USA, Canada and Finland in addition to school aged and 2 & 3-year-old children in the UK for several flu seasons.

Can anyone else catch flu from a recently vaccinated child?

A small number of respiratory illnesses (including wheeze) were reported in the contacts of vaccinated children. Most of these events were self-limiting and some of them are likely to have been coincidental. Vaccinated children are known to shed virus for a few days after vaccination but it is less able to spread from person to person than the natural infection as the amount of virus shed is below the levels needed to pass on infection to others and the virus does not survive long outside of the body.

My child cannot have the nasal flu vaccine – is there an alternative?

If your child is in one of the clinical at-risk groups and has a contraindication to the nasal flu vaccine, the injectable vaccine should be given in its place. Also, healthy children who have family contacts who are very severely immunocompromised should be given an inactivated influenza vaccine (injection).

My child has not had the flu vaccine before. Is only one dose required as other vaccines have a course of 2 or 3?

Children aged 2-11 in the healthy children's programme require only one dose of the nasal flu vaccine, irrespective of whether they have had the flu vaccine before. Children aged 2 to less than 9 who are in a clinical at-risk group require 2 doses of flu vaccine given 4 weeks apart.

My child is asthmatic and on inhaled steroids. Is the nasal flu vaccine safe?

Children taking any dose of inhaled steroid can receive the nasal flu vaccine. If, however, the child is experiencing increased symptoms of wheezing and/or needing more reliever (blue inhaler) treatment in the last 72 hours, the injectable vaccine should be given to avoid a delay in protection. Children who take regular oral steroid tablets to control their asthma or have previously had an ICU admission for asthma exacerbation should consult with their specialist before accepting the nasal flu vaccine.

My child has a mild illness on the day of vaccination. Should I delay the vaccination?

The clinician would only advise to delay vaccination if the child had a fever; this is to avoid the situation where signs and symptoms of the illness are attributed to being side effects of the vaccine.

My child is allergic to egg. Should I refuse the nasal flu vaccination?

Egg allergic children can safely receive the nasal flu vaccination – even those who have had a previous anaphylactic shock. The only exception is those children who required admission to ICU – these children should have the vaccine administered in a hospital setting. All staff administering vaccines are trained to spot and treat anaphylaxis.

Children who have had an anaphylactic reaction to egg requiring ICU admission and have an underlying medical condition (such as asthma) should receive an injectable flu vaccine with a very low ovalbumin content or the cell-based vaccine for those children aged 9 or above.

Do flu vaccines contain pork gelatine?

The nasal flu vaccine contains a highly processed form of pork gelatine as one of its additives. The injectable flu vaccines **DO NOT CONTAIN GELATINE DERIVED FROM PIGS.**