

Influenza vaccine information sheet

What is Influenza?

- Influenza is a seasonal virus that causes “flu”. In most children, this causes a mild illness, but in a small proportion can cause severe illness.
- In children who have other illnesses (such as chronic kidney disease) or who are immunosuppressed, flu can be more severe and vaccination is recommended.

What are the different types of vaccine?

- There are two forms:
 1. Nasal spray – *Fluenz Tetra*® – live (but weakened) vaccine.
 2. Intramuscular injection – killed vaccine.

Can my child get flu from the vaccine?

- The intramuscular injection is an inactivated, killed form of the vaccine so your child can't get the influenza illness from the vaccine itself.
- Although the nasal spray contains some live vaccine, this has been inactivated and in healthy children (not on immunosuppression) this also does not cause the flu illness.

Is the vaccine 100% protective?

- No – the virus does change over time and despite best efforts, the annual vaccination will not provide 100% immunity.
- It is therefore important to still be aware of the symptoms of flu, including fever, headache, chills, runny nose, sneezing and coughing. If you are worried about your child seek medical advice.

My child had the vaccine last year, do they need it again?

- Yes – the virus can change from year to year and the department of health tries to adapt the vaccine each year to best prevent against the illness.
- Immunity does not generally last more than a year, so even if your child had the vaccine previously, they should receive it again this year.

Who should be vaccinated?

- Current NHS England guidance is that the vaccine is offered to children aged 2 – 3 years and school aged children from Reception to Year 11.
- School aged children will receive the nasal spray vaccine at school.
- Pre-school children, those receiving the vaccine injection and home-schooled children should be vaccinated at their GP surgery.
- The vaccine is also recommended to children over 6 months old with:
 1. Chronic kidney disease stages 3 – 5 (including those on dialysis)
 2. Nephrotic syndrome (even if not currently on medication)
 3. A kidney transplant
 4. Atypical HUS
 5. Immunosuppressant therapy for other kidney conditions

How many doses of the vaccine does my child need?

- If your child does not have a medical indication as above, they only need 1 dose each year.
- If your child has a medical indication as above but has had the flu vaccine before or is over 9 years old, they only need 1 dose each year.
- If your child has a medical indication as above AND this is the first year your child has had the vaccine AND they are under 9 years old they need 2 doses. The second dose is given 4 weeks after the first.

Which children should NOT get the vaccination?

- Children under six months old.
- Children less than three months' post kidney-transplant.
- Children with a living donor transplant planned within the next month.

Which children should have the intramuscular injection and not the nasal spray?

- Children over six months and under 2 years old.
- Children over three months' post kidney-transplant.
- Children on dialysis.
- Young women who are pregnant.
- Children actively waiting on the kidney transplant list.
- Children taking aspirin or similar medications.
- Children on steroids (such as prednisolone) now or within the last 3 months.
- Children who are on immunosuppressants or who have had in the last 6 months:
 - Rituximab
 - Cyclophosphamide
 - Tacrolimus
 - Alemtuzumab (CamPath)
 - Azathioprine
 - Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF)
 - ATG

My child is allergic to egg, does this matter?

- If your child is having the nasal spray, it is safe to give unless they have had a severe (anaphylactic) reaction to egg AND needed to be admitted to intensive care during a reaction – if so seek advice from your GP and ask to have the nasal spray in hospital or ask for the injection.
- Children with an egg allergy under the age of 2 can be offered the very low egg content vaccine – discuss this with your GP.
- Children with an egg allergy over the age of 2 having the injection can be offered the very low egg content vaccine – discuss this with your GP.

Are there side effects from the vaccine?

- The nasal spray is safe, most side effects are mild and short lived, they include:
 - Runny/blocked nose
 - Headache
 - Tiredness
 - Reduced appetite
- Side effects from the inactivate injection include:
 - Pain in the arm at injection site
 - Mildly raised temperature
 - Ache in muscles
 - Tiredness
- It is unusual for the influenza vaccine to cause: New continuous cough, loss or change in sense of smell or taste or high temperature – if your child develops these symptoms you will need to follow current public health advice for suspected COVID-19 or upper respiratory tract infections.

Does the vaccine come from pigs?

- Yes, the nasal vaccine contains gelatine, derived from pigs. However, this is highly purified.
- No pig-derived gelatine is used in the intramuscular injection.

Does my child need to be off school during vaccinations?

- Children **do not** need to be kept off school whilst the nasal vaccine is administered at school unless they are one of the following:
 - Children already off school following transplantation.
 - Children who have had ATG or Alemtuzumab (CamPath) within the last 6 months.

- The nasal spray vaccine does not create a “mist of vaccine” and others in the room are not at risk of “catching” the virus.
- The amount of any virus shed after vaccination is usually below the levels needed to pass on the infection to others.
- However, if close contact with severely immunocompromised patients is likely or unavoidable (such as those above), consider using the inactivated flu injection.

Do other people in the household need to be vaccinated?

- During the flu season, we would also recommend that household contacts of children receiving the vaccine because they are immunosuppressed or who have chronic kidney disease also receive the vaccination. This can be either the nasal spray or the intramuscular injection.
- In the following situation, household contacts should receive only the intramuscular injection when children in the house:
 - Are within 3 months of kidney transplantation.
 - Have had ATG or Alemtuzumab (CamPath) within the last 6 months.
 - Have had Cyclophosphamide within the last 3 months.

Can my child have the COVID vaccine at the same time?

- Yes, if your child has recently had a COVID vaccine they can have the influenza vaccine.
- COVID and influenza vaccines can be given at the same time (just need to be in different sites).

Where can I find further information?

- The government information sheet can be found online here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68230602c66deec8488f7f93/Protecting_your_child_against_flu_leaflet_primary_school_WEB_FINAL.pdf

- If you are in doubt about which vaccine you or your child should receive please send a text to the renal nurse textphone (07812 275254) and someone will phone you back.

Dr Drew Maxted, Dr Martin Christian
October 2017, reviewed September 2025

References:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1018779/Influenza_vaccination_information_document_for_healthcare_practitioners.pdf

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/618591/Flu_vaccination__A5_booklet.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/635920/Childhood_flu_programme_information_for_healthcare_practitioners.pdf

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Immunizations in children with chronic kidney disease. Alicia M Neu, Pediatric Nephrology (2012)27:1257-1263

Vaccination in solid organ transplantation. L Danziger-Isakov, D Kumar and the AST infectious diseases community of practice, American Journal of Transplantation 2013;13:311-317

2013 IDSA clinical practice guideline for vaccination of the immunocompromised host. L Rubin *et al*, Clinical Infectious Diseases 2014Feb;58(3):309-18

NUH guideline: Guideline for Influenza Immunisation for Adults and Paediatrics 2017/2018

<https://vk.ovg.ox.ac.uk/vk/gelatine>

www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/child-flu-vaccine/