

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

As children with pre-existing medical conditions may be more vulnerable to complications of flu it is especially important that they are vaccinated. Children may not be able to have the nasal vaccine if they:

- Are currently wheezy or have been wheezy in the past 72 hours. They will be offered a suitable injected flu vaccine to avoid a delay in protection.
- Have needed intensive care due to asthma or egg allergic anaphylaxis (Children in these two groups are recommended to seek the advice of their specialist and may need to have the nasal vaccine in hospital).
- Have a condition, or are on treatment, that severely weakens their immune system or have someone in their household who needs isolation because they are severely immunosuppressed.
- Are allergic to any other components of the vaccine (See the website at <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/> and enter Fluenz Tetra in the search box for a list of the ingredients of the vaccine). Vaccine allergies are generally very rare.

If you are unsure whether your child should get the injected vaccine or the nasal vaccine, please check with the Child Health Centre or your GP.

Children who have been vaccinated with the nasal spray should try avoid household contact with people with very severely weakened immune systems for around two weeks following vaccination. These would include people with cancer or suffering from kidney failure, in receipt of a transplant, or taking drugs that suppress the immune system such as high doses of oral steroids.

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

Yes. The nasal vaccine contains a highly processed form of gelatine (porcine gelatine), which is used in a range of many essential medicines. The gelatine helps to keep the vaccine viruses stable so that the vaccine provides the best protection against flu. Islamic and Jewish scholars have agreed that administering this is acceptable. If this goes against your wishes, we can provide an injectable vaccine instead.

Can my child have the injected vaccine that doesn't contain gelatine?

The injected vaccine is not being offered to healthy children as part of this programme. However, if your child is at high risk from flu due to one or more medical conditions or treatments and can't have the nasal flu vaccine they should have the flu vaccine by injection. The nasal vaccine provides good protection against flu, particularly in young children. It also reduces the risk to, for example, a baby brother or sister who is too young to be vaccinated, as well as other family members (for example, grandparents) who may be more vulnerable to the complications of flu.

Some faith groups accept the use of porcine gelatine in medical products - the decision is, of course, up to you. We would always advise protection against the flu, whether by injection or nasal spray.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on the flu campaign in Gibraltar, contact the Child Health Centre on **20070143 ext. 3351/3361** or visit healthygibraltar.org

For further information about porcine gelatine and the nasal flu vaccine, see:
www.nhs.uk/child-flu-FAQ
www.nhs.uk/child-flu

5 reasons to get your child vaccinated

1. **Protect your child.** The vaccine will help protect your child against flu and serious complications (such as bronchitis and pneumonia), particularly when Covid-19 co-infection could occur.
2. **Protect you, your family and friends.** Vaccinating your child will help protect more vulnerable friends and family.
3. **No injection needed.** The nasal spray is painless and easy to have.
4. **It's better than having flu.** The nasal spray helps protect against flu, has been given to millions of children worldwide and has an excellent safety record.
5. **Avoid costs.** If your child gets flu, you may have to take time off work or arrange alternative childcare.



PROTECTING YOUR CHILD AGAINST FLU



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



The seasonal flu vaccination programme is now underway. Vaccination is offered free to all children aged 2-18 years.

Why should my child have the flu vaccine?

Flu can be a very unpleasant illness in children causing fever, dry cough, sore throat, aching muscles and joints, and extreme tiredness. This can last several days or more. This winter COVID-19 is likely to be co-circulating with flu, and many of the key symptoms remain indistinguishable. Getting the Flu vaccine will greatly reduce your risk of Influenza and potentially severe respiratory problems associated with co-infection.

What are the benefits of the vaccine?

Children under the age of 5 years have the highest rate of hospital admissions due to flu. Getting your child vaccinated will provide direct protection for your child and also reduce transmission to other members of the community; particularly those who are more vulnerable such as grandparents and those with long-term health conditions cannot mount a good immune response. The effectiveness of the vaccine varies from year to year depending on the match between the strain of flu in circulation and that contained in the vaccine. Vaccination can also help you avoid having to take time off work or other activities because you are ill or need to look after your sick child.

Is it Covid or Flu?

Any flu-type symptoms should be treated as a viral illness, potentially Covid-19, requiring self-isolation until further advice is sought; Call 111. Covid-19 may only be ruled out following a negative swab.



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

Yes; flu viruses change every year so the vaccine may be updated. For this reason, it is important that your child is vaccinated against flu again this year, even if vaccinated last year.

Who will give my child their vaccination?

The vaccine will be given by the Child Health nurses, who are also responsible for delivering routine vaccinations.

Can the vaccine cause flu?

No, the vaccine cannot cause flu because the viruses in it have been weakened to prevent this from happening.

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 these flu viruses, it helps the immune system to fight off the infection. The vaccine is absorbed quickly in the nose so, even if your child sneezes immediately after having had the spray, there is no need to worry that it has not worked.

Can the flu vaccine be given to my child at the same time as other vaccines?

Yes. The flu vaccine can be given at the same time as all the other routine childhood vaccines. The vaccination may be delayed if your child has a fever. Also, if a child has a heavily blocked or runny nose, it might stop the vaccine getting into their system. In this case, their flu vaccination can be postponed until their nasal symptoms have cleared up. Children are exposed to multiple organisms every day, and this is common and does not normally lead to problems.

What about my child who has a health condition?

Children with certain health conditions, even if well managed, are at higher risk of severe complications if they get flu. It is especially important that these children are vaccinated. These conditions include:

- Chronic respiratory disease (for example, severe asthma needing regular inhaled or oral steroids)
- Chronic heart disease (such as heart failure)
- Chronic kidney disease (at stage three, four or five)
- Chronic liver disease (such as cirrhosis)
- Chronic neurological disease (such as Parkinson's disease)
- Diabetes
- Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment (such as HIV/AIDS or cancer treatment)
- Asplenia or splenic dysfunction.

Your GP may also recommend that your child is vaccinated if they have a condition that affects the nervous system (such as cerebral palsy). These children should have a flu vaccination every year from the age of 6 months onwards.

How will the vaccine be given?

Most will have the nasal spray vaccine but it should not be given to children:

- under the age of 2 years
- in clinical risk groups who have not received the seasonal flu vaccine before
- for whom the nasal spray is not suitable for medical reasons (an injectable flu vaccine will be offered instead).

We intend to run vaccination clinics in schools, and you will be informed of when that will take place. If your child has any of the health conditions listed above you are not sure whether your child needs a flu vaccination or you need more advice, speak to your GP or Child Health Nurse.

How effective is the vaccine?

The vaccine is the best protection we currently have against the flu virus.