

Flu Vaccination Frequently Asked Questions

Where will my child receive the vaccine?

Children in primary school will receive their vaccine in the school setting. Children aged 2 and 3 on 31 August will receive their vaccine in the GP setting. Your child's School or GP will contact you about getting vaccinated before the winter.

Why are healthy children being offered flu vaccine?

Flu is a disease that spreads very rapidly, potentially causing widespread illness, especially in those who are already vulnerable because of their age or medical condition. So, if children are vaccinated against flu, they will not only benefit directly by being protected themselves but will also reduce the spread of flu and help protect the whole population. In particular, they will help to protect those children and adults who cannot or do not have the vaccine. With the flu season rapidly approaching, it will also help to reduce pressure on the NHS and other vital services.

Does my child have to have the flu vaccine?

No. As with all immunisations, flu vaccinations for children are optional. However, this vaccine will help protect them from what can be an unpleasant illness, as well as stopping them spreading flu to vulnerable friends and relatives.

What vaccine will my child receive?

Most children will be offered the Fluenz nasal spray. This is a single spray squirted up each nostril. It is needle free, quick and painless.

Can my child have the injected flu vaccine instead of the nasal spray?

The nasal flu vaccine is more effective than the injected vaccine for children aged two and over and is therefore the preferred option.



Will the flu vaccine give my child flu?

No. The vaccine contains viruses that have been weakened to prevent them from causing flu.

Why is the Fluenz nasal spray vaccine being used?

The flu virus enters the body through the nose and mouth. From there it is transmitted to the throat and upper airways where it rapidly replicates and goes on to cause the symptoms of flu. Because Fluenz also enters the body through the nose it mimics the flu virus and results in a better immune response than an injected vaccine. This means that, compared with injected and less active vaccines, Fluenz:

- Is more effective
- Provides protection for longer
- May offer protection against slightly different types of flu virus
- Is easier to give and more comfortable to have

How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine contains live but weakened flu viruses that do not cause flu in children. It will help your child build up immunity to flu in a similar way as natural infection, but without

symptoms. Because the main flu viruses change each year, a new nasal spray vaccine has to be given each year.

Does the nasal flu vaccine contain pork?

Yes, the vaccine contains a highly processed form of gelatine that is derived from pigs – porcine gelatine. This gelatine helps to keep the vaccine viruses stable to ensure it provides the best protection against flu.

Why is porcine gelatine used in nasal spray vaccines?

Gelatine is used in a very wide range of medicines, including many capsules and some vaccines. Porcine gelatine is used in vaccines as a stabiliser – to ensure that the vaccine remains safe and effective during storage. Vaccine manufacturers normally test a wide range of stabilisers and choose one that is stable, good quality and available in sufficient volume. Unlike the gelatine used in foods, the product used in vaccines is highly purified and broken down into very small molecules called peptides.

Why can't vaccines be made with other stabilisers or other types of gelatine?

Developing a vaccine takes many years of laboratory testing and clinical studies to ensure that it is both safe and effective. Once the manufacturer has chosen the stabiliser for the vaccine, any change in this could require extensive laboratory and clinical studies to show that the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine has not been affected. Because of this, developing a new safe and effective vaccine with a different stabiliser may take several years or may never happen.

Are there any suitable alternatives to this vaccine?

There are injectable flu vaccines that do not contain porcine gelatine. These are generally expected to be less effective than Fluenz Tetra® in children. They may also do less to reduce the spread of flu in the community. These vaccines are currently only recommended as part of the programme for children and adults who are at high risk of the complications of flu.

What is the view of the faith communities?

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has consulted with the Kashrut and Medicines Information Service who said: 'It should be noted that according to Jewish laws, there is no problem with porcine or other animal derived ingredients in non-oral products. This includes vaccines, including those administered via the nose, injections, suppositories, creams and ointments.'

The Muslim Council of Britain position states 'that vaccines containing porcine are not permitted in Islam unless lives are at risk and there are no alternatives. Muslims should not automatically refuse treatment. Health is paramount, anyone concerned about the use of gelatine in vaccines must consult a medical practitioner and make an informed decision.'

UKHSA acknowledges that there is diversity within the British Muslim and Jewish communities and they, and some other groups, may consider medicines and vaccines containing any porcine product to be forbidden. In these circumstances, it is likely that the individual would be unable to accept many pharmaceutical products unless there was no suitable alternative and/or the product was considered life-saving.

Where can I find out more information on the flu vaccine?

For more information on the flu vaccine for children click the following links:

[Child flu vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Protecting your child against flu; Information for parents and carers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Flu vaccination in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Vaccines and porcine gelatine - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)